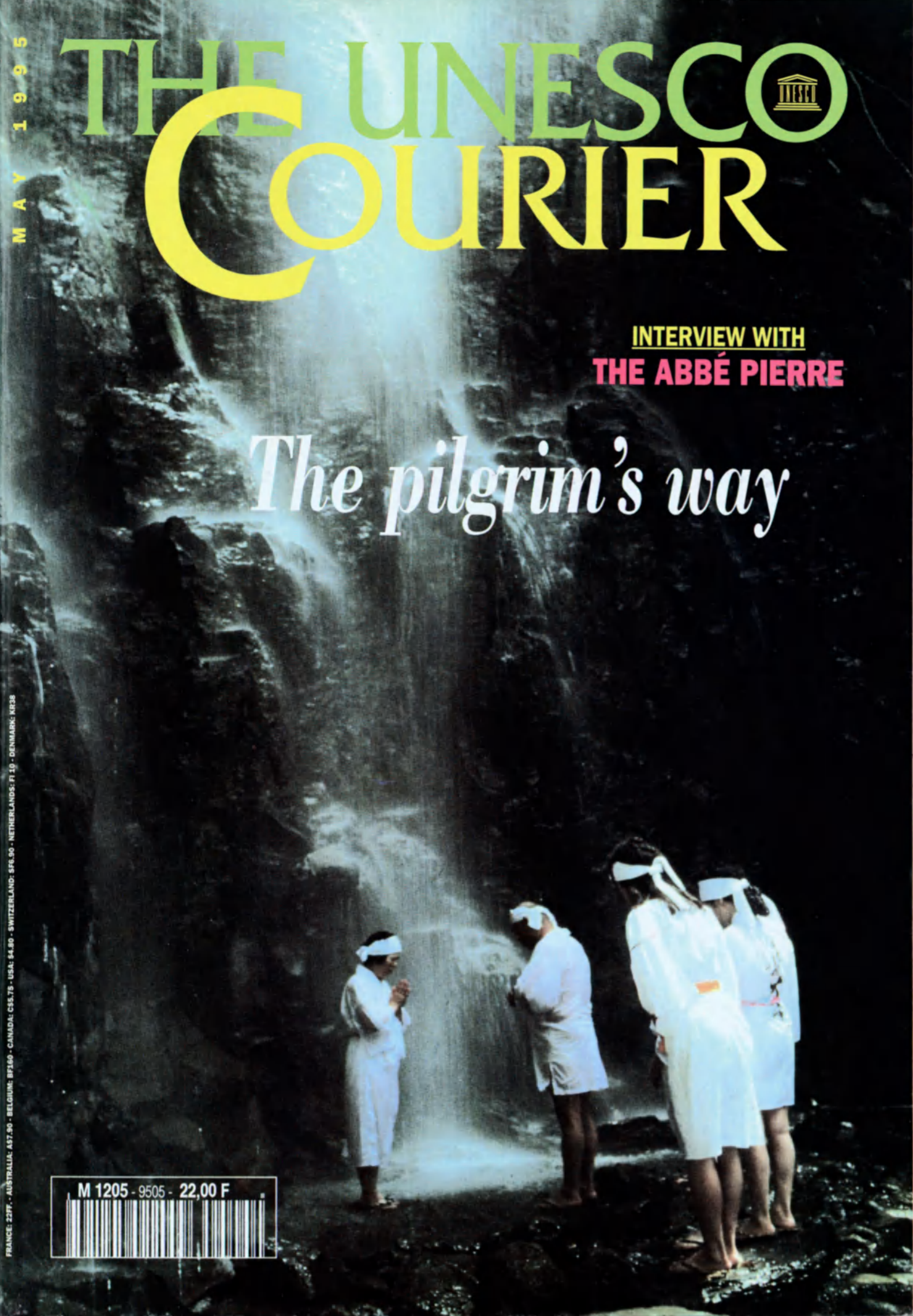
MAY 1995

THE UNESCO COURIER

INTERVIEW WITH
THE ABBÉ PIERRE

The pilgrim's way



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ENCOUNTERS

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

Birth Sun
1993, coloured etching
(77.5 cm x 51 cm)
by Helen Hawley

In this image of the sun and the earth the artist, who originates from western Canada, has been inspired by early Cree or Blackfoot Indian paintings on buffalo skins. "The message I'm trying to get across," she writes, "is how much all of us have in common, under the universal light and warmth of the sun."

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pilgrims perform ritual ablutions in Takao waterfall on Mount Ontake (Japan).

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THE UNESCO COURIER

48th year
Published monthly in 30 languages and in Braille

"The Governments of the States parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare,
"that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed . . .
"that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.
"For these reasons, the States parties . . . are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives. . . ."
EXTRACT FROM THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF UNESCO, LONDON, 16 NOVEMBER 1945

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Month by month

Pilgrimages began long ago. In most religions they are times of intense spiritual feeling. They also have political implications.

They kindle the collective imagination around a holy place that is charged with symbolism, a site associated with crucial moments in the life of a religion. The act of pilgrimage intensifies the personal faith of believers and strengthens their bonds of fidelity to their community.

By their very nature, therefore, places of pilgrimage ought to be outside the arena of temporal ambitions and rivalries. But, as we know, this is not always the case. Because those who control centres of pilgrimage are invested with prestige and even moral legitimacy to an exceptional degree, these holy places have sometimes become pawns in power struggles and triggers of confrontation.

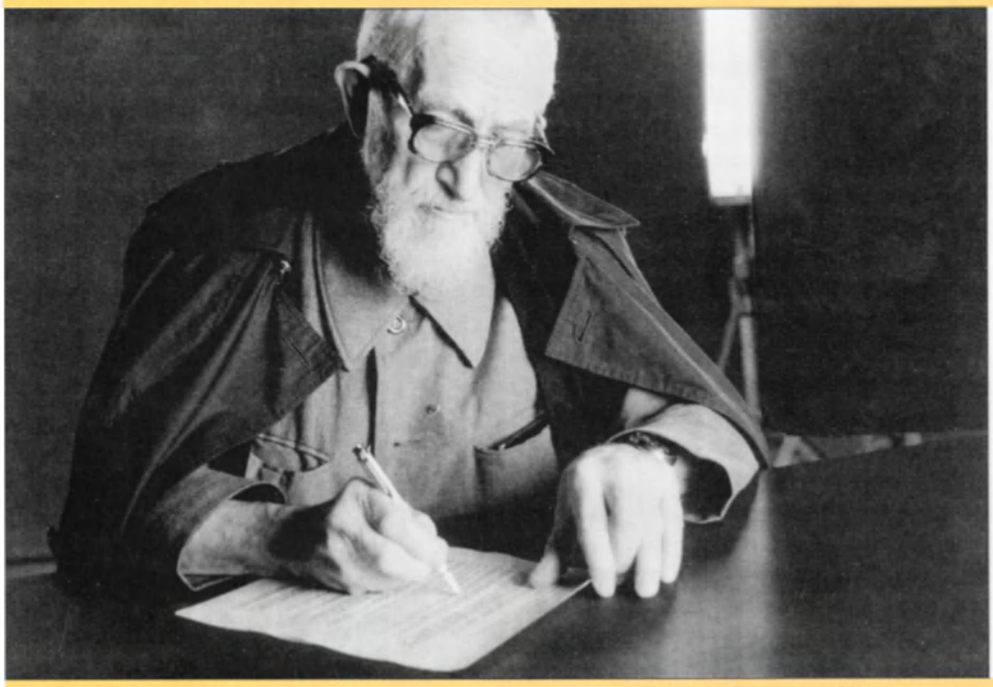
Throughout history people of all sorts and conditions, inspired by authentic religious fervour, have gone off to make war on others over a city or a mountain, a cave or a valley—a site which both sides considered to be sacred.

How could these men, who suffered the most gruelling hardships, in many cases leading to mystical experiences, go so far as to kill each other in order to gain possession of places there was every reason for them to share and honour together?

This agonizing question, so often pondered in the past, is posed with renewed force today. In our age of paradox and contradiction, horizons broaden for everyone and yet solitude and insecurity increase. All over the world, opportunities for meeting others, for self-expression and mutual understanding are so often thwarted by impulses to ignore or reject others, even to risk mutual destruction.

The great centres of pilgrimage where the symbolic pathways of different religious communities have overlapped since ancient times must cease to be flashpoints of contention between these communities. They should provide the faithful of all denominations with an opportunity to achieve reconciliation by rediscovering, through their different forms of religious symbolism, the meaning of their common attachment to the same holy site. In so doing they will provide the rest of the world with new reasons to believe in the unity of humankind.

BAHGAT ELNADI AND ADEL RIFAAT



THE ABBÉ PIERRE

talks to Martine Leca

You, who thought yourself superfluous, are needed.

The Abbé Pierre (a pseudonym adopted in 1942 by Henri Grouès, born in Lyons, France, in 1912) has championed the cause of the poor and dispossessed for almost half a century. He is internationally known for his work with Emmaus, the charitable association which he founded in 1949 and which now has branches in many parts of the world. In 1991 he was awarded the Balzan prize for humanity, peace and brotherhood between peoples. Among his published works are *Emmaüs ou venger l'homme* (conversations with Bernard Lechevallier, Livre de Poche, Paris, 1987), a liturgical play, *Le mystère de la joie* (1985), *Mes images de bonheur, de misère, d'amour* (Text by Pierre Lunel, photos by the Abbé Pierre, Fixot, Paris, 1994) and *Testament* (Bayard, Paris, 1994). Here he looks back over his life and work.

■ **You started out as a monk. How did you come to be the spokesman of the poor, travelling round the world and meeting heads of state? How did you come to make the change from contemplation to action?**

—When I was eighteen I told my parents I wanted to become a novice in the Capuchins, the strictest branch of the Franciscan Order. I came from a wealthy family. I made over my share of the estate to various charities. My family background was deeply Christian. My father, unbeknown even to his close relatives and friends and although he was in poor health, used to spend his Sundays, with a small group of friends, looking after vagrants. When I was fifteen or so I went through a period of doubt that lasted for about two years and the pangs of which were aggravated by a long illness. Illness has always brought me nearer to a state of grace. The process of my transformation came to a head with my discovery of St. Francis of Assisi during a pilgrimage I went on with a scout troop from my school. Sensing what was to be the characteristic feature of my whole existence, they gave me the "jungle name" of "Thoughtful Beaver"—he who builds and meditates—and my life has indeed been one long venture of thinking and building.

My encounter with St. Francis was a defining moment. One night in Assisi, during Easter week, feeling unwell and unable to sleep I went out into the streets of the old town and walked as far as the foot of the ruined fortress. It was five in the morning and it was wonderful. It was springtime, the birds' dawn chorus was beginning and all the bells of the town started to ring out the angelus. As the sun rose I jotted down on a piece of paper—which I still have—the feelings that filled my heart: "Oh the bells! To die on a morning of bells. To die on one of those mornings when the whole earth confesses the fullness of Love".

That afternoon, my friends and I went on muleback to what are known as the prisons, the caves where St. Francis used to go to meditate. When we returned to Assisi I knelt and kissed the ground because back there two things had become powerfully evident to me: firstly, that worship leads to universal communion with humanity; and secondly, that it provides an extraordinarily effective preparation for action, as we can see from the life of St. Francis, a life spent in contemplation and at the same time in meeting with princes and telling them the truths of the Gospel. Those seven years in the cloister were the key to my life. Providence was well aware what lay ahead for me, and my Capuchin training was to prepare me for it.

■ **What is the life of a Capuchin monk like?**

—The studies are rudimentary. In my time—it's not like that any longer—we were awake every night from midnight to two o'clock. We spent the first hour chanting in two choirs and the second in pure,

The true driving force, the one that makes things move forward, is striving towards Unity, not greed.

unadorned worship, in the dark, without even a reading to help us. Seven years of such a ritual when you are a young man leaves a mark upon you like that of a seal in wax. Without experiencing that extreme, almost excessive way of life, that training in worship and in the love of one's neighbour, I would not have had the strength required to set up Emmaus and to wage a forty-year combat. Echoing Archimedes' words, "Give me but one firm spot on which to stand and I will move the Earth", the Pope declared that love is a lever that can move the Earth. I owe that strength to my Capuchin brothers. I had to leave in 1938 because of illness and I was ordained a priest, but I remained in touch with Franciscan spirituality through what is known as the third order of St. Francis of Assisi. Then war broke out and I was called up.

■ **You were thrown into active life and joined the Resistance . . .**

—I started off as a non-commissioned officer in the Alps and in Alsace, then, after I had had diphtheria, I worked as a chaplain in the Isère *département*. During the years when the Resistanee was underground, from 1942 to 1944, I helped to set up maquis groups in the Chartreuse and Vercors regions. While I was a chaplain in the cathedral of Grenoble, a tragedy occurred that triggered off everything I have done since then: the round-up of Jews at the *Vélodrome d'hiver* cycle track in Paris. The French police and gendarmes, in many cases shamefacedly and reluctantly of course, carried out the order they received from the minister responsible for Jewish affairs in the Vichy government to round up the Jewish families in the unoccupied zone. One day some Jewish refugees came to me, as a man of God, asking for shelter, and I hid them. Then I learned how to forge identity papers and finally, as the arrests became more frequent, I smuggled Jews out of the country, into Switzerland and Spain, with the help of mountain guides.

After the war, prompted by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, I entered Parliament so that a priest could speak out for the poor, as canon law at that time still permitted. This strengthened me in my task. I had to plead the cause of society's outcasts before the multitude and before the authorities. I resigned my seat in 1951.

■ **It was at that time you founded Emmaus. Why did you choose that name?**

—It stands for hope. I rented a derelict house in Neuilly-Plaisance, in the eastern suburbs of Paris, and started "beavering" away, doing up a building which soon turned out to be too big. So I turned it into a youth hostel. The young people who came to it—twenty-year-olds, English, Italian, German, French, some of them orphans of the war in which their fathers had killed each other—were sad, their disgust with life increased by the recent discovery of the horror of the concentration camps.

One day I was re-reading St. Luke's Gospel, the part where, on the third day after Jesus' death, the disciples were making their way towards the village of Emmaus—you remember? They were discussing what had happened. They were downcast, disappointed, because Jesus had been announced as a prophet, come to set them free, but nothing had happened. As they walked, Jesus drew near and went with them but they did not recognize him. It was only when he was at table with them and took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them that their eyes were opened. Afterwards, they spoke those favourite words of mine: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?" So I took a board, wrote "Emmaus" on it and hung it on the door of the house, and I gave all those young people this explanation: "You must believe that a good, successful life entails disillusion but also enthusiasm. It first of all entails that honesty which can lose its illusions with a good grace, for we come into the world filled with illusions but we shed them as we grow so as to arrive at the truth, and we can only succeed by letting go of them. The disciples, who had lost hope, recovered their enthusiasm—which does not mean elation but, in the Greek, becoming one with the Eternal, which is Love—and went off to proclaim the good news to the apostles, saying that they had seen the risen Christ."

That was how Emmaus became a movement giving refuge to those whom life has treated roughly. One of the first was a man called Georges who had tried to commit suicide. He had served twenty years in a penal colony for killing his father and had been pardoned after saving someone in a fire at the prison, but when he came back he found his wife with another man and other children. In desperation he tried to kill himself. Somebody sent for me and I listened to him, and I said to him, without thinking, instinctively—it was the Spirit of God making me its instrument: "Georges, you want to die, you say you are going to try to commit suicide again. Before you kill yourself, wouldn't you like to come and give me a hand to finish these houses for families in need?"

The question I asked Georges has now become a general one—You, who thought you were superfluous, who thought there was no place for you in society, not only are you not superfluous, you are needed—and so those who were beggars become givers. Since those days the movement has gone on growing as poverty has spread. Emmaus is still not sufficiently active in Africa, however.

■ **In fact, branches of Emmaus now exist on five continents. This "uprising of goodness" goes back to 1954, when you became known in France as "God's rebel" and the inventor of the "licence to live" . . .**

—In the winter of 1954, which was exceptionally hard all over Europe, people were dying of cold in the streets. No provision had been made to help them. My friends and I went out every night to rescue the homeless, but the friends who helped me at night had to work in the daytime as well, to earn a living and to feed the poor. The task was becoming superhuman, so I wanted to make an appeal on the radio. When a certain broadcaster was being evasive, one of my friends said to him: "Just

Anger is my way of expressing my love. We need to combat the indifference of the authorities. I shout out loud to awaken the crowd.

imagine yourself, in the warmth of your home and with your family around you, opening the paper at breakfast tomorrow and learning that more people had been picked up dead off the streets in the night—you *must* broadcast this appeal."

The broadcaster gave in, the unprecedented call went out, and it had an extraordinary impact throughout France. Gifts in cash and in kind, from rich and poor alike, came in from all over the country, and Parliament, which had previously refused to allocate funds from the public works budget for what I called "emergency housing", accepted my request. That appeal also brought to light the extent of poverty in France. But having become "God's rebel" I was a nuisance, as St. Francis was for the prelates of the Holy Mother Church. The Minister of the Interior said they must strike at the head of the movement, but the Chief of Police, who was a secret sympathizer of ours, stood his ground and said the Abbé Pierre should be left alone. Why? Because I was a priest, I had been a member of Parliament, I had my wartime decorations and I had the silent support of the underprivileged.

Emmaus now has branches in thirty-five countries, and I have travelled all round the world spreading the word. From 1958 to 1965, I made many journeys and gave many lectures in support of the communities that were coming into existence in Lebanon, in Scandinavia, South America, Asia and Africa. Emmaus divides the world into nine regions, each of which appoints a number of officers who make up the Administrative Committee, which in its turn appoints a ten-member Executive Committee. The presidency of the international movement is based in the Paris suburb of Alfortville. Another thing that has contributed greatly to the spread of Emmaus are the international camps we have set up, where young people from all over the world come and work together for the poor. These volunteers undertake to devote a major part of their time, or even their whole lives, to this cause.

■ Is Emmaus a specifically religious movement?

—No. Although it was founded by a Catholic priest and takes its name from the Gospel, it is non-denominational and non-political.

■ Poverty is being constantly aggravated by the population explosion, the mismanagement of resources and the growing gap between North and South. What role does Emmaus play in combating these problems?

—It plays not one but two roles. The first is to stand up to the authorities and remind them of their basic duties. We have to do this in order to establish peace on earth and to be of service, above all, to those who suffer most, the weakest and the smallest; and also in order to establish an order in the world, in a context where the youth of today are the first generation to have a planet-wide awareness, where any event, anywhere in the world, has repercussions everywhere on account of the speed of communication.

The second role derives from the fact that living in the Emmaus communities are 4,000 people who have taken some hard knocks in life and who are motivated by the desire not to make more money, but to work in order to give. They have not caught the profit disease. How have we fed these 4,000 people, paid their social security contributions and paid for holidays for them? By using what the consumer society throws away, saving things to save people. We were ecologists before the letter. The French town of Beaune, for example, asked us to send a team to tackle the problem of unauthorized rubbish dumping.

The Abbé Pierre in a Paris building occupied by homeless squatters (1994).

■ The poor nowadays can be said to have a certain power vis-à-vis the democracies. They are a danger; you compare them to human time-bombs.

—There has been a turning point in human history. I see the first sign of it in the guffaw let out by Nasser, the head of a nation, Egypt, that in the 1950s did not carry much weight in the international arena. In 1956, when he nationalized the Suez Canal and blocked access to it, he brought the two great nations Britain and France to their knees. We have entered the age of the impotence of the strong and the power of the weak, although the power of the latter is only relative: it can make the mighty bow down but can hardly manage the electrification of a country.

■ The numbers of the dispossessed in the so-called developed countries are growing. Does the fault lie with capitalism, which, necessary though it may be, has been led astray by the profit motive?

—Capitalism may be said to be necessary, since even communism was no more than

state capitalism. A balance needs to be struck between private capitalism and a partially state-run capitalism, which restores to citizens, in the form of social security, family allowances and other safeguards, what has been taken away from them. This reminds me of the last conversation between Roosevelt and Stalin. The American President said that their two countries had got along pretty well in the war but that the war would soon be over and what would happen then? Stalin is said to have replied: "The only problem is whether our successors will be intelligent enough to avoid the worst, I mean using atomic weapons. But eventually the defects of capitalism will get mixed up with those of collectivism. People will no longer stand for being deprived of their freedom, and the time will come when your sons will marry our daughters."

■ **You have called for the establishment of a world government. Isn't that utopian?**

—Utopias are the carthorses that have pulled history along. It's true that humanity has seen a succession of crises, wars and atrocities, but this negative side is offset by advances in technology and cultural exchanges. Despite atrocities such as those in Rwanda, humanity is advancing towards the One, towards Unity, as my friend the French palaeontologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin predicted it would. The true driving force, the one that makes things move forward, is this striving towards Unity, not greed. The One is not the uniformity into which all individuality fades but that which brings people together on the mountain top, whatever different paths they take to reach it.

■ **Together with the homeless, you take over vacant properties, you go on hunger strike, you camp out in front of government offices. Is this your way of putting your faith into practice?**

—Anger is my way of expressing my love. We need to combat the indifference of the authorities. I yell out loud to awaken the crowd. It's not enough to attend church and pray every Sunday; you have to act. Many of the faithful devote themselves to charitable work. Poverty is there on our doorstep. That was why I invented the "licence to live", emphasizing that it was not a question of charity but of justice. Because of all this, I have had to be a one-man band—lawyer, diplomat, counsellor, psychologist, trustee—in short a man of action and a darling of the media because on a world-wide scale journalists have an essential role of informing, warning and querying, three vital functions in a society that harbours exclusion, despair, disorientation and hopelessness. People are needed to take up the challenge, strong people, who proclaim the truth, throw it in people's faces, and do what they can with their own two hands.

When they are assailed by despair, young people should let universal concerns into their lives. Then they will find their place in society, where a state of emergency has been declared.

What's more, at the time when our "illegal" activities were at their height, I always pointed out that illegality is not moving into empty premises that could provide shelter for a woman and children. What is illegal is the law itself when it fails to provide everyone with the bare necessities—food, lodging, work and health care—as human rights, at present flouted, require. The law in such cases is unjust, and to observe it is unjust: it must be changed.

■ **There is also the grave problem of the unemployed with time on their hands, time that they should use creatively, not destructively.**

—It is a characteristic of the times we live in that we are a society foredoomed to having time on our hands, a civilization living in the concrete jungle, not the forest, where the prospects for survival are different and in the long term capable of improvement. This is a new kind of time, which should be made life-enhancing, not degrading. The French socialist leader Léon Blum was ridiculed when he proposed a "Ministry of Leisure", but he was ahead of his time. There are three million unemployed in France, not counting those who have taken early retirement and are fully able-bodied, in full possession of their skills but unable to use them. There is an imperative need to invent life-enhancing ways of using this spare time, otherwise a whole segment of our society is in danger of sliding into drug abuse, drink and delinquency—time to help others, time for play and sport, for instance, not to produce champions earning fabulous sums of money but for the joy of the game, of exercising the body.

■ **Do you have a message of hope for young people?**

—Hope is not a matter of age. The main thing is to be young at heart, to still feel enthusiasm for great causes, even at eighty-two. When they are assailed by despair, young people should let universal concerns into their lives. Then they will find their place in our society, a society in which a state of emergency has been declared. The lack of a cause to fight for, the desire to live in an artificial environment, being drawn into the spiral of consumption, the way people are forgetting how to be what I call "extremists in the search for light"—all these things have created the present climate of despondency. The coming generation must escape from it: this, the first planet-wide generation, must be mobilized to fight the only worthwhile war, a counter-attack on poverty, which has declared war on the whole world. These young people have the good fortune to be mobilized for the finest of all victories.

What I would say to the young men and women who are beset by hopelessness and doubt is that they should go and see what is being done on the ground to fight poverty, not like going to the zoo but to take action, to open their hearts and their consciences. After this kind of voluntary service, they will find job openings in humanitarian work. There is a combat to be waged against the forces of evil, those life-denying forces that prevent people achieving fulfilment and pitch them into suicidal behaviour. Young people must remember three things: they are foredoomed to know everything, foredoomed to new ways of sharing and foredoomed to have time on their hands, time they must transform from idleness into creative activity. It is in these three lines of force that their hope lies. ■

MARTINE LECA
is a French writer and journalist.

A mysterious journey

by François-Bernard Huyghe

Pilgrimages are a feature of most of the world's religions

Between non-existent pillars, bathed in unearthly light, a human clone advances without moving. As he looks around or continues on his imaginary way, the perspective changes and different parts of the sanctuary float into or out of his field of vision.

The scene thus described is real enough. By means of virtual imaging technology, people wearing headsets linked to computers can "visit" the basilica of Cluny in France, "walk" around the ambulatory, "turn" right or left, "gaze upwards" at the vaulting and so forth, though they may be hundreds of miles away.

Wearing a virtual reality headset, the believer can theoretically "see" a place of worship, but could he or she thereby be considered to make a pilgrimage? The faithful of all religions would answer "no" to this provocative question, and, perhaps, condemn the very idea of such a pretence. There can be no pilgrimage without a body of flesh and blood, no pilgrim's way without a dusty road, no effective devotion without real space. This is the first paradox associated with pilgrimage. The body must grow heavy for the soul to become light. Feet are needed to go where the spirit breathes. That is why, in the age of the instantaneous transmission of images and of rapid transport, great multitudes surge around the Kaaba, on the banks of the Ganges or on the plain of Chartres.

Far from being outmoded, pilgrimages are highly topical. But what are they, exactly? The concentration-camp survivor who revisits Auschwitz and the old soldier who tours the cemeteries along the Verdun road where the bones of the fighting men of the First World War lie mingled are commonly said to be making a pilgrimage. On a less sombre note, we talk of making a pilgrimage to the scenes of our youth or to the place where we met a loved one. But whether they are connected with death or love, respect or nostalgia, such visits to the scenes of the past are pilgrimages only by analogy, by reference to a kind of journey that should not be confused with any other.

Above, ***Pilgrims going to Mecca*****, a painting by the French artist Léon Belly (1827-1877). Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is the birthplace and heart of Islam.**

Below, young penitents take part in a pilgrimage to the church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a few kilometres away from the centre of Mexico City. The church stands on the spot where the Holy Virgin appeared to an Indian in 1531. About 10 million pilgrims visit the shrine every year.

A pilgrimage is a quintessentially religious act which creates a bond. It connects secular places with the world above, the wayfarer with the travelling community of the faithful, and the flesh-and-blood pilgrim with his second self, who will be reborn, healed or cleansed by making the pilgrimage. These bonds or bridges between orders of reality imply that there is a distinction between pilgrimages and mere ceremonies, gatherings, acts of worship, processions or devotional visits, even though pilgrimages may include all of these. They require at one and the same time a sacred place, a sacred way and a sacred goal.

Few religions have been able to do without this threefold mediation. Some have expressed mistrust of a practice, often spontaneous and originating among the rank and file, that can easily degenerate into superstition, the fetishistic veneration of relics, or the impious assessment of merits and rewards. Many Christian theologians, for example, see pilgrimages as an obstacle to contact with the divine in the form of a pointless, or impure, detour through the world of the senses. This was the attitude of the Reformation towards Catholic pilgrimages in the sixteenth century.

Buddhism is divided between its reservations about the relics or representations of the Enlightened One (since he shows the way to liberation from the cycle of reincarnation) on the one hand and, on the other, the demands of the faithful who, even in the lifetime of Gautama Buddha, begged him for places, relics or signs to help them express their fervent devotion to him after his disappearance. Just as any religion may experience a battle between iconolaters and iconoclasts (is it possible to achieve knowledge of the divine through the love of palpable representations?), so theologians waver, where pilgrimages are con-

Left, Hindu pilgrims make their way to the Amarnath caves, over 4,500 metres high in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir.

cerned, between fear of degeneration into idolatry or magic and acknowledgment of believers' permanent needs.

We cannot say for certain that pilgrimages have always existed, even though there is evidence to suggest that travellers made their way to holy places in prehistoric times. In the absence of written records to shed light on their significance, we shall never know whether these hypothetical gatherings met our definition. On the other hand, we have well-attested written records of pilgrimages dating back to the Mesopotamian civilization, to the holy places of Nippur and Babylon, and of sacred journeys made by the Egyptians and the Hittites.

Though we cannot be sure that pilgrimages are a universal phenomenon, geographically speaking, it should be remarked that very few religions that have spread beyond the territorial confines of a single ethnic group have not given rise to comparable gatherings in some form or other.

Holy places

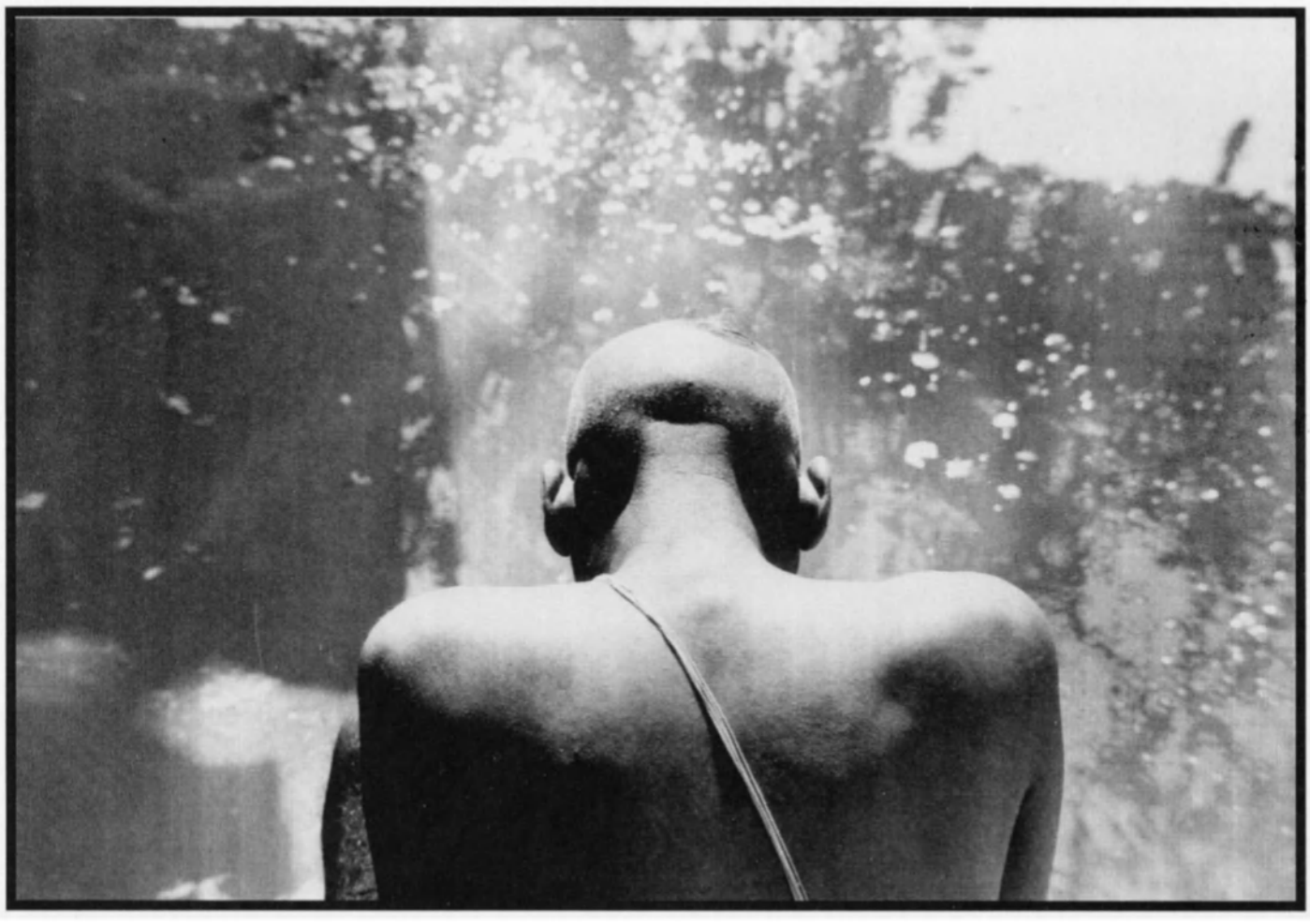
Is the symbolism of the topography of the pilgrimage any less worthy to be considered universal than the pilgrimage itself? What is the constant goal? Holy places come in various kinds. They may be mountains or rivers, grottoes or lakes, trees or springs, but by the depths

The three essential components of a pilgrimage are a sacred place, a sacred way and a sacred goal.

from which they rise or the height that they attain they suggest a transition to another dimension than the horizontal and terrestrial where the pilgrim lives, moves and has his being. This is the first interpretation that comes to mind of the pilgrim's destination, be it the Ganges or Mount Arafat, Athena's olive or the Bodhi tree, the mountain top where the Taoist pilgrim climbs to seek audience, or the springs of Lourdes where the sick immerse themselves.

While most pilgrimages lead to a holy city or building, one should also add the dimension of time to that of space. The shrine, whether it contains the relics of a saint or the visible marks of a past contact with the divine, a temple, a tablet of the law, signs of a miracle or reminders of a covenant, recalls some foundation event. The goal of the pilgrimage, whether it is a place from which the faith emanates, a centre on which it converges or a commemorative representation, allows of many different interpretations. The power at work is often so great that one and the same site

Below, pilgrims celebrate appearances of the Virgin Mary in the Senegalese village of Popenguine, some 30 kilometres south of Dakar. The pilgrimage takes place each year at Whitsuntide.



A Brahman at prayer on the banks of the Ganges in Benares (Uttar Pradesh), a major pilgrimage centre in India.

may be revered by various faiths, in succession or simultaneously. Thus, we learn from medieval travellers' tales that the same tracks at the top of a mountain in present-day Sri Lanka were variously revered as the footsteps of the Buddha and as those of Adam, and drew Buddhists, Muslims and Christians alike. Jerusalem, city of peace, is sacred to the three major monotheistic religions. Peace often lies more in the significance of such places than in the logic of men.

Homeward bound

The goal is, however, nothing without the way to it. The pilgrim's progress is a journey through space and time and within the self, a metaphor of the secular life and something that endows it with meaning. The pilgrim's way also establishes a bond: it brings together and unites travellers at the same high point in their existence, it spreads ideas and models, and it forges an alliance between peoples who share a faith and a culture. It would be absurd to exclude Mecca, Jerusalem, or the road to Compostela, Delphi or Olympia from any explanation of the historical unity of the civilizations to which they belong. Such an explanation would lack an essential component—the idea that civilization implies transmission and circulation.

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Mere specks borne along in a movement that is greater than they are, pilgrims are also transformed when they reach the end of their personal journey. They may hope for a sickness to be cured, for the remission of a misdeed, for a cleansing or even a mystical death and symbolic rebirth, but whatever happens they will end their pilgrimage different from when they began it. Regenerated by an initiatory journey, having cast off their old selves, they often celebrate this regeneration in the joyous explosion of festivities and celebrations that mark the end of a cycle. Then the time of remembrance begins.

From the Chinese *Journey to the West* (*Hiyou Ji*) to Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East* and Lanza del Vasto's *Return to the Source*, literature has by no means exhausted the commemoration or interpretation of pilgrimages. This may be because pilgrimages obey two contradictory principles: that of *otherness* (going to another place, experiencing a different time, becoming another person) and *repetition* (retracing a sacred route, repeating gestures, returning to a point of departure...). Flesh-and-blood pilgrims solved that mystery long ago. When pilgrims reach journey's end they know they have returned to their true home. ■

MAYA MEETING

"Hail to our Sun father, colour of fire, and to thee, our Earth mother, our beloved who has suffered so much. We must pray for those who do not grasp the meaning of our Earth mother and who have so often bloodied her flesh. All the violence we have suffered ourselves, the earth alone can share. . . ." With these opening words the first "Assembly of the sages of the Americas" began its proceedings on 12 March 1994 in Guatemala. During the ten-day meeting, held on the Maya site of Iximche, once the capital of the Cakchiquel nation, Maya priests held traditional ceremonies around the sacred fire and reaffirmed the attachment of their people to their spiritual, social and cultural identity. The meeting ended in the impressive ruins of the ancient Maya city of Tikal.

The thrice-holy city

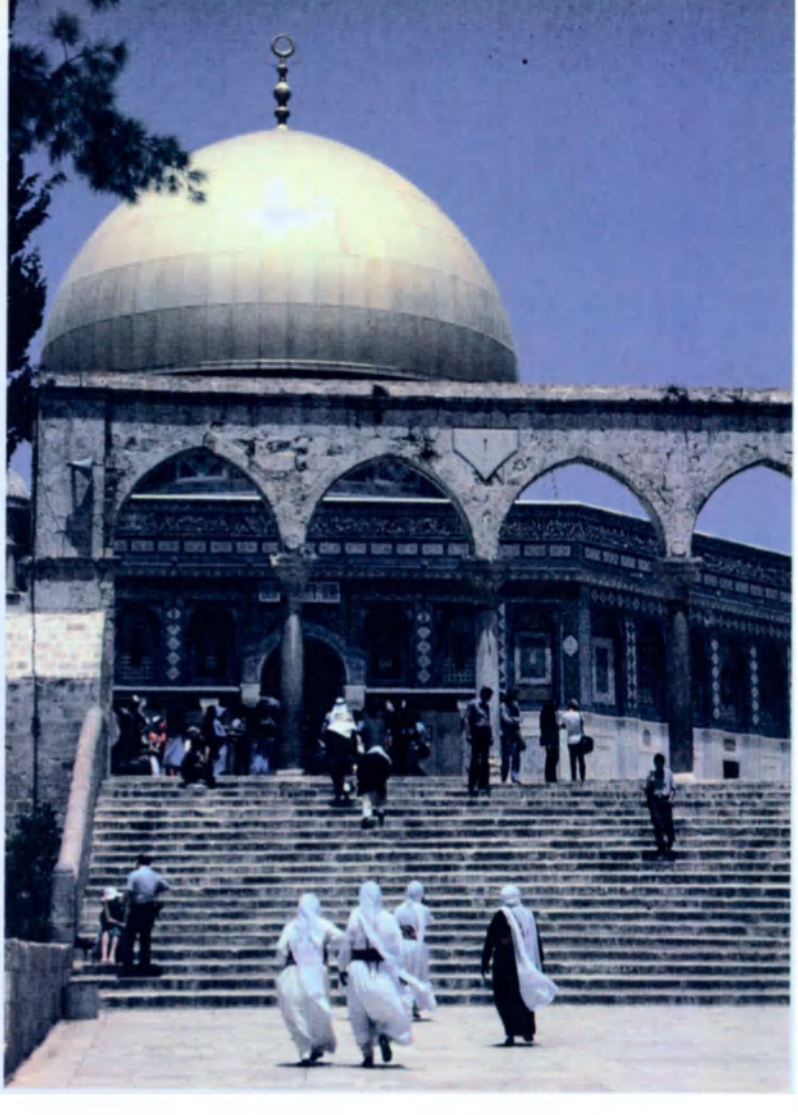
by Annie Laurent

Jerusalem is a magnet for Jewish, Christian and Muslim pilgrims from all over the world

Jerusalem enjoys the unique privilege of being holy three times over—for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The Jews learn in the Torah (a Hebrew translation of the Greek word "Pentateuch", designating the first five books of the Bible) that at the end of time the Messiah announced by the prophets will appear on Mount Zion—one of the seven hills of Jerusalem, once the "City of David"—and that all peoples will become one. In order to be as near to the fulfilment of this prediction as possible, believing Jews the world over dream of being buried in the cemetery on the side of this sacred hill. Until then, it is written that Jews must remain "a holy nation and a people of priests", and not merge into other nations. This is one of the underlying reasons for the foundation of the state of Israel as both a temporal and a spiritual kingdom with Jerusalem as its "eternal" capital.

Christians refer to the Revelation of St. John the Divine in the New Testament and believe that the earthly Jerusalem will be transformed into a heavenly city. Except for the short-lived "Kingdom of Jerusalem" in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which was established after the city was taken by the Crusaders, Christians have never placed the city on a political footing. They venerate Jerusalem only for its role in the coming of Christianity and for the memories associated with this. It is there that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on human form to redeem the world and experienced the most painful and the most glorious moments of his earthly existence, notably the crucifixion and the resurrection.



According to Muslim tradition, the faithful await the coming of Muhammad on the Temple esplanade, where he will meet Abraham, Moses and Jesus (in the Qur'an Jesus is only referred to as a prophet) and pray with them as a harbinger of the last judgment and the resurrection. But Jerusalem means something more to Muslims. As Muhammad's destination on the night of the mystic journey during which he was carried to heaven on his mare, it is the third most holy site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Because it is recorded in the Qur'an, this episode is accepted as an absolute truth: "Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs." (Surah XVII).

Tens of thousands of faithful pilgrims belonging to the three major monotheistic religions flock to Jerusalem all the year round, transforming the city into an astonishingly colourful canvas of human diversity. The effect is intensified by the fact that the main holy sites are concentrated in the Old City, a relatively small area surrounded by four kilometres of ramparts. The Old City (East Jerusalem) has four districts (Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Armenian), and was under Jordanian rule between 1948, when the state of Israel was created and the first Israelo-Arab war took place, and 1967, when it was conquered by the Israelis during the Six-Day War. Since 1967 the Israelis have controlled the pilgrimage process.

The Wailing Wall

Temple Mount is a site of supreme importance for the Jews. The famous edifice that protected the Holy of Holies was rebuilt by Herod I the Great in 37 B.C. on the ruins of the First Temple built by Solomon. All that remains of Herod's temple, which was destroyed by the Roman legions of Titus in 70 A.D., is a twelve-metre-high foundation wall familiarly known as the "Wailing Wall", which the Israelites had sworn never to abandon.

The dilapidated quarter in which the Wall stood until 1967 has been torn down and replaced by a broad paved esplanade. Pious Jews fervently wish for the Temple to be rebuilt, but this is impossible since it would mean demolishing Muslim sanctuaries that have since been built on the site. A synagogue and a rabbinical

Photos above, from left to right.

The Wailing Wall (or "Western Wall") in the Old City of Jerusalem is a vestige of the second Temple, built by Herod I the Great (last century B.C.) on the site of the Temple of Solomon. It is the most important of the Jewish holy places in Jerusalem.

The Greek Orthodox chapel in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is shared by Christians of various denominations.

The Dome of the Rock. Built over a rock considered sacred by Muslims, this shrine constructed between 688 and 691 is considered to be the oldest existing Islamic monument.

school have also been built near the foundations of the Temple.

The Noble Holy Place

The raised platform once occupied by the Jewish Temple became the Muslims' *al-Haram ash-Sharif* ("The Noble Holy Place"). In 636 Jerusalem was captured by Caliph Umar, one of whose successors, Abd al-Malik, built an octagonal-shaped mosque on the site to house the rock where Muhammad is reputed to have had his dream. This is why the building is known as the "Dome of the Rock". As the French writer René de Chateaubriand noted in his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* ("Journey from Paris to Jerusalem"), only Muslims were allowed access to the platform, and if the nineteenth-century French traveler Pierre Loti was privileged to walk beneath the Dome of the Rock, it was because he received a special dispensation from the Pasha of Jerusalem.

Today the "Noble Holy Place" is open to everyone except on Fridays, the Muslim day of special congregational prayer, and on Islam's great feast days (the Mawlid, which commemorates Muhammad's birthday, and the Id-al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan). The gatherings do not, however, take place at the Dome but at the nearby al-Aqsa mosque, which was built around the same time.

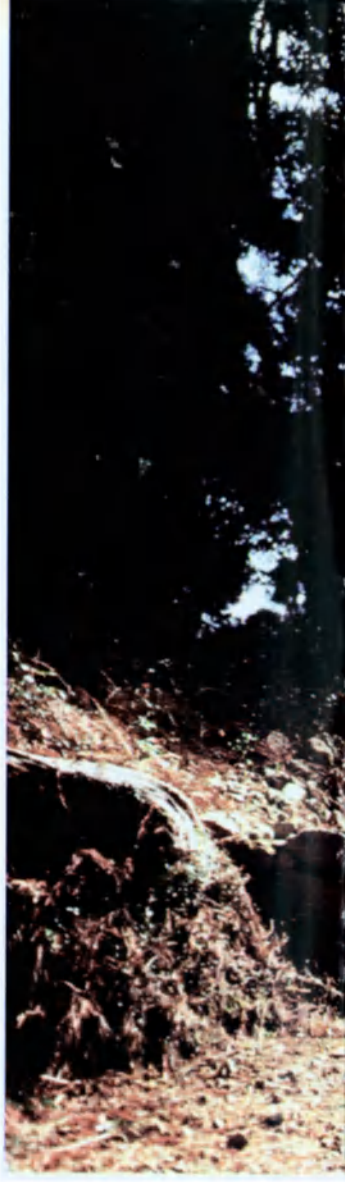
Al-Aqsa draws from all over the East a growing number of the faithful, who mingle with the early morning crowds of Palestinians who ride in from the outlying villages of the West Bank and Gaza in hired coaches. On most mornings the atmosphere is fairly relaxed, but on Fridays it is tense because entrance into the "Noble Holy Place" is carefully screened by Israeli soldiers posted in front of the wooden gate leading into it. Many of the faithful are not admitted either because they are suspected of being activists or because there are too many of them. The excluded have to be content to pray packed together in the nearby streets.

The Holy Sepulchre

Christian pilgrims flow into Jerusalem during the main Christian festivals, Easter being the most popular because of the importance of the events remembered at that moment in the Christian year. Their first destination is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which was begun by St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. This huge, dark building covers Calvary, the small outcrop where Christ was crucified, and the tomb fifty paces away where he was buried and from which he arose on the third day. Chateaubriand noted that the church, "consisting of several churches built on uneven ground and lit by a multitude of lamps, is particularly mystical. A darkness reigns there that fosters piety and inner reflection."

For centuries, the hierarchies of different denominations have disputed the guardianship of the Christian holy places. Unable to reach agreement, they have made ad hoc arrangements about the occupation of time and space. Franciscan "Custodians of the Holy Land" rub shoulders with Greek and Russian patriarchs, Coptic and Abyssinian monks from Egypt and Ethiopia, Maronites and Melchites from Lebanon, Armenians and Nestorian priests from Syria and Iraq. To add to this mosaic of Christianity are Christians from the English-speaking world, including Mormons, Anglicans and other Protestants, who do not actually have any rights over the holy places but possess a historical, cultural and liturgical heritage in the Old City which they jealously protect.

The Way of the Cross, a Good Friday procession through narrow streets (the *Via Dolorosa*) whose shops remain open, takes place in an atmosphere of indescribable confusion. In reaction to such difficulties a growing number of Christian pilgrims prefer to visit Jerusalem "out of season" when they can fully benefit from the silence of the holy places that are so dear to them. ■



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THE ROADS OF FAITH

As part of the World Decade for Cultural Development, UNESCO has launched a "Roads of Faith" project as a tribute to Jerusalem's international, intercultural and inter-religious importance and to make the city a centre of peace and understanding among people.

Launched in 1991, the project has acquired new significance in the light of the peace talks between Israel and the Arab countries. Mr. Doudou Diène, UNESCO's Director for Intercultural Projects, notes that it could open up new possibilities for UNESCO to contribute to the peace process through an attempt to rediscover the network of relationships woven in the past between the three monotheistic religions.

Pathways to enlightenment

by Michael Pye

In Japan some pilgrimages involve a grand tour of almost a hundred temples. Others take only a few minutes' walk.

Above, a pilgrim pathway lined with sacred effigies at Tai Ryu Ji temple at Anan, a city on the east coast of Shikoku Island (Tokushima prefecture).

Pilgrimages in Japan usually combine a serious religious intention with a readiness to enjoy the journey as an excursion of recreational value. This has been true at least since the eighteenth century, when pilgrimage became popular as one of the reasons for which ordinary people could get permission to travel. Since then it has usually been difficult to distinguish between the touristic and the religious aspects of pilgrimage. Or rather, we should say that it is inappropriate to try. Leisure travel has often simply been combined with religious travel, with the more or less integrated purpose of maximizing individual and family welfare. It is therefore small wonder that nowadays even the rather serious long-distance Buddhist pilgrimages are performed with the help of a comfortable coach and pre-booked hotel accommodation.

In general two types of pilgrimage may be distinguished in Japan. One is what may be called "single-site" pilgrimage, that is, a religious journey, for special reasons, to one specific holy place. This is not different in principle from pilgrimage the world over. The second is only complete when a number of sites of equal importance have been visited. In a strict sense this type of pilgrimage appears to be special to Japan.

Single-site pilgrimages in Japan are important in several religions. Historically significant was the pilgrimage to Ise Jingu, the great Shinto

shrine to the sun-goddess Amaterasu. In the eighteenth century this was immensely popular and became something of a mass movement. Today the visitors to Ise Jingu are again very numerous, though they are relatively restrained, being satisfied with a short prayer and a commemorative photograph. The journey itself is not difficult, though it is a little complicated from major centres such as Tokyo or Osaka. Other major Shinto shrines draw their own special public. Izumo is one of several shrines where prayers for a good marriage are thought to be specially effective.

Dawn on Mount Ontake

In some cases there is a kind of division of labour according to region. Inari-sama, a divinity of commerce, is visited at the Fushimi Inari Shrine near Kyoto by residents of western Japan and at Kasama Inari Shrine, north of Tokyo, by those living on the eastern Kanto Plain. Since visits to these shrines nevertheless involve considerable journeys they may be regarded as pilgrimages in a general sense. After all, it is usually possible to say prayers to Inari-sama much nearer to home, as many business areas or even individual businesses have their own shrine to this Shinto god or *kami*. Pilgrimage is the deliberate traversing of a route to a sacred place which lies outside one's normal habitat.

Buddhism in Japan is organized in several different strands or denominations, and in most cases it is the historic head temple which provides the natural focus for pilgrimage. Some of these temples are relatively difficult to reach. The centre of Shingon Buddhism, for example, was purposely set up by its founder Kukai on remote Mount Koya. Nowadays the neighbourhood can be reached by rail or road and there is a cable car to master the difficult ascent to the top.

Other Buddhist denominations have centres in urban areas. Shin Buddhist believers, for example, flow regularly to the two great temples in Kyoto, namely Higashi Honganji and Nishi Honganji, which are both within walking distance of the railway station. Visits to these temples are not meant to be arduous. Rather they are understood as an act of loyal devotion and gratitude, for the believers rely on the saving power of Amida Buddha rather than on any merit of their own.

Another famous centre of Buddhist pilgrimage, an extensive temple area known as Zenkoji, is jointly cared for by two Buddhist traditions, the Tendai and the Jodo (Pure Land) denominations. Situated high up at Nagano City, the temple draws thousands of visitors every year. Regardless of affiliation, many of them descend into the dark space beneath the main hall to circumambulate the huge base of the Buddhist statue up above. Feeling their way around the central pillars with their outstretched right hands, they experience the total darkness of death before being symbolically reborn when they finally emerge into the light of day.

Some of the historic pilgrim sites of Japan are extremely mysterious and escape denominational definition. A fine example of this is Mount Ontake in Nagano Prefecture, a lightly active volcano which tops 3,000 metres above sea level. The local bus service stops well short of the main part of the mountain, which is not served by any mechanical transport at all.

Rearing up past the tree-line into the clouds, the mountain itself is regarded as a *kami*, and may therefore be worshipped "from afar", that is, from a small shrine near the bottom. However, many groups of religious believers prefer to make the arduous climb to the top, where a Shinto-style shrine is perched. This climb consists of a scramble up a barely made up pathway, much of which is simply a stream of irregular stones.

The horizontal distance is 3,000 metres, but over this distance the pilgrim makes a steep ascent of one thousand metres. A popular approach is to climb up in the afternoon or evening, stay overnight in a rough hostel and worship the rising sun at crack of dawn. Many of the pilgrims wear white clothing which is similar to that worn on Buddhist pilgrim routes. Those who climb Mount Ontake generally share the idea that the arduousness of the climb, which is undertaken by many people of quite advanced age, will create merit and empower the rest of one's life in a positive way.

The Saikoku 33 and the Shikoku 88

The second major type of pilgrimage in Japan is the "circulatory" type. This is based on the idea of visiting in sequence a series of, for example, thirty-three different temples. The number thirty-three arises because the compassionate

A pilgrim at prayer in Rei Zan Ji Temple in the city of Naruto (Tokushima prefecture). In foreground, a rosary and (right) texts commemorating the pilgrimage.

Pilgrims make their way down from the summit of Mount Ontake, a holy place in Nagano prefecture on Honshu island.

bodhisattva Kannon-sama (the equivalent of Kuan Yin in Chinese and Avalokitesvara in Sanskrit) is said to have appeared in thirty-three different forms to bring salvation to living beings in different states of karma.

The most famous group of thirty-three temples dedicated to Kannon-sama is known as the Saikoku Thirty-three. These are quite widely spread out in western Japan and require anything up to two weeks to visit even using modern transport. This pilgrimage is almost a thousand years old and must have taken several weeks to cover on foot in days gone by.

Imitations of the Saikoku pilgrimage have been developed all over Japan. Well-known and popular since the Edo period (1600-1868) are the Bando pilgrimage, which is spread widely over the Kanto plain around Tokyo, and the Chichibu pilgrimage which is much more tightly arranged around the little city of Chichibu to the northwest of Tokyo. Chichibu has thirty-four temples to Kannon-sama, one more than usual, and this means that a keen pilgrim may link the Saikoku, Bando and Chichibu routes to complete a circuit of one hundred in all.

The other dominant pilgrimage of this second type is the Shikoku pilgrimage to eighty-eight temples, Shikoku being Japan's fourth largest island. At these temples the pilgrim first visits the main hall, which may be dedicated to any one of several different buddhas or bodhisattvas. A visit is then paid to a secondary hall of worship devoted to Kobo Daishi, as the founder of Shingon Buddhism, Kukai, was posthumously named.

While the various regions of Japan are known for their famous mountains and special traditions, Shikoku is identified in people's minds with this very ancient pilgrimage. It takes about four weeks to complete visits to all the temples, using modern transport. Since this is arduous and costly, a number of much smaller imitations have been set up.

The message on the pilgrim's straw hat

Some require one day's gentle walking. Others require the circulation, usually clockwise, of a series of eighty-eight stones or buddha-images, each of which stands for one of the Shikoku temples. This can be done in a few minutes. Such miniatures are well understood, for the abbreviation of long and difficult practices has been an accepted principle of Japanese religion for centuries. While the famous Buddhist saints have often been known for their astonishing ascetic feats, nobody is expected to do more than they can manage.

In the Buddhist pilgrimages simple actions are performed at each temple and are usually of three kinds. First a slip of paper is deposited which bears the pilgrim's name, address and age, and states the prayers for which fulfilment is sought. Such petitions include "safety at home", "success in business" and "welfare of ancestors". Second, brief prayer, or recitation of a sutra—a piece of scripture—such as the Heart

Feeling their way around the main hall of the temple, the pilgrims experience the total darkness of death before being symbolically reborn when they finally emerge into the light of day.

Sutra or the Kannon Sutra is offered. In Shingon Buddhism a mantra (*shingon*)—a holy name or word for inward meditation—directed towards the specific Buddha or bodishattva is often included here. Third, a temple attendant sitting patiently in a small office is requested to inscribe the pilgrim's commemorative book, scroll or shirt with red temple seals and fine calligraphy in black ink.

This completed memento, for which a small fee is paid at each temple, will ultimately be proof that the pilgrimage has been completed as a whole. It may be deposited at the last temple as a final act of donation. In the case of a pilgrim's shirt, an extra one bought for the purpose, it may also be given to a sick or very old relative in preparation for their deathbed. This dedication shows that the pilgrimage mirrors in life our ultimate passage through death, but in a manner which opens this up to a Buddhist meaning. Through pilgrimage, life comes to be understood as transitory, or as "empty", to use the word which occurs in the Heart Sutra itself.

Circulatory Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan is therefore full of different meanings. For some who go round it is little more than a healthy leisure activity with simple participation in some of the general forms of Japanese religion. Transactions at the temples involve the payment of relatively small sums of money in exchange for the expectation of benefits to oneself and one's family in this life. These are known literally as "this-worldly benefits" (*genzeriyaku*). For others the meaning is more transformational. Their experience is deepened as they reflect, during the journey, on family hopes and gratitude to ancestors, on the sequence of life and death of which they themselves are a part.

In Buddhist understanding the ups and downs of this life are put in a more relative perspective. If travelling from one place to another reflects the difficulties and efforts of life, the completion of the pilgrimage makes the passage through death seem possible. Paradoxically this message is carried in a four-line verse which appears on many a pilgrim's conical straw hat. It runs in translation:

Through ignorance the three worlds are a prison
Through enlightenment the ten directions are empty
Originally there is neither east nor west
Where then shall be south and north?

In other words, the difficulty of finding the pathways to a multitude of goals is a transient matter indeed. The real goal is enlightenment, beyond all thoughts of the points of the compass. Of this the pilgrim's own hat is a constant reminder. ■

The Shinto shrine of Fushimi Inari, near Kyoto, is dedicated to the goddess of rice.

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In medieval times the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain was a major attraction for western Christian Europe

The road to Compostela

by Millán Bravo Lozano

Pilgrims gather in front of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela on 25 July to celebrate St. James's day.

"Who can this great and powerful figure be to whom Christians from both sides of the Pyrenees throng to address their prayers? So mighty are the multitudes journeying back and forth on the road westward that there is hardly any room to move on it. We have been told that the person in question was 'St. James, the apostle of our Lord and Saviour', whose body is buried in Galicia, and who is venerated as patron and protector of all the lands of Christendom: France, England, Italy, Germany and, first and foremost, Spain."*

Thus wrote the ambassadors of the Emir Alf ben Yussuf (1106-1142), full of wonder as they took the road leading to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. ("Santiago" is the Spanish for St. James). Where had they come from, these crowds of pilgrims who obstructed their way? When had this pilgrimage begun?

The pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela honours the apostle St. James the Great. The son of Zebedee (a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee) and Salome (one of the holy women who habitually accompanied Jesus), St. James was the

brother of St. John, another apostle and a key figure in the New Testament.

After the death of Christ, St. James preached the gospel in Palestine until he was beheaded on the orders of Herod Agrippa I, nephew of the notorious Herod the Great. He was probably executed in 44 A.D., thus becoming the first apostle to be martyred. According to legend, he also preached in Spain, where his mortal remains were taken and buried in Galicia.

The mythical Moor-slayer

In 711 A.D., a Muslim army from North Africa landed on the Spanish coast near Gibraltar. The Visigothic kingdom of Spain was in decline, and within seven years the entire peninsula had succumbed to these courageous and well-trained invaders. For the next eight centuries, throughout the Middle Ages, the history of Spain was to be determined by the relationship between the opposing religious and cultural powers of Islam and Christianity, a relationship which was difficult but not always hostile.

St. James was to become the symbolic figurehead of the "reconquest" of Spain by the forces of Christianity, and a knowledge of his mythological role in this struggle is essential to an understanding of medieval Spain. Known as Santiago Matamoros ("St. James the slayer of Moors"), he is traditionally depicted as a warrior armed with a sword and sitting astride a white horse.

An opportune discovery in the ninth century revealed the legendary burial place of St. James near the town of Iria Flavia, at the westernmost tip of the Iberian peninsula.

For some time previously, the hermit Pelagius and the natives of this area had been troubled by strange and mysterious phenomena. At night the air would be filled with supernatural light and the sound of sweet canticles, sung as if by angels. Bishop Theodemir was informed of these occurrences, and their source was immediately identified as a tomb, undoubtedly that of St. James the Great. When news of this felicitous discovery reached Alfonso II the Chaste (759-842), ruler of the small kingdom of Asturias and León, whose capital was Oviedo, the king wrote, "... the presence has been revealed to us of the most precious treasure of the blessed apostle, namely his sanctified remains. Learning of this, my spirit filled with devotion and supplication, and with my court I immediately hurried to worship and venerate this precious relic, and we paid homage with great shedding of tears and prayers to the patron saint and protector of Spain."

The origins and history of the pilgrimage

In contemporary documents, this discovery is described as an *inventio*, in the sense of an encounter that was so unexpected and marvellous as to be considered supernatural. The king made arrangements for a chapel to be erected on the site of the tomb, and shortly afterwards this was enlarged and transformed into a basilica. The town of Santiago de Compostela grew up around the tomb, which was to become so powerful a symbol of Christianity in Spain that the victory of the Christian armies at Clavijo in 844 was attributed to the direct intervention of St. James. The town was ransacked by Almanzor

STEPS TO KNOWLEDGE

The road to Compostela! Its unique influence gave Spain power in the medieval world, bringing back the spiritual riches—science, literature and art—that first flowed outward across the Pyrenees. It brought a number of illuminated manuscripts to the south of France, including the *Commentary on the Revelation to St. John* by the monk Beatus of Liébana, whose strange and marvellous miniatures inspired the first examples of romanesque sculpture at Cluny, Moissac and Toulouse. It provided a channel for the spread of the evocative themes of epic literature, taken up and moulded into French form in the *Chanson de Roland*, which sings the praises of Charlemagne in his battles against the Moors. It was via pilgrimages that the metre and courtly ideal of Andalusian lyricism crossed the border into the songs of the troubadours in the French Languedoc, the trouvères and even the Minnesingers, teaching them the flavour of oriental music.

The road to Compostela! It brought scholars from all over Europe to the school of translation in Toledo. They came from the hills of Dalmatia, the cities of Italy, the banks of the Elbe, the canals of Bruges and the mists of Scotland, returning home with Latin translations of the key works of the great philosophers and sages of Islamic Spain, but also of those—Christian, Muslim or Jewish—who had made Toledo a respected centre of knowledge to rival the archdeaconry of Segovia, still greatly admired by men of knowledge.

The road to Compostela! It brought many new things to Spain from Western Europe: romanesque and gothic, the rites and hierarchy of the Church, Roman institutions and French literature, Italian scholarship and the legal systems of the Bologna School. Through its thousand pathways plied by pilgrims and villains, noble and rascally individuals, St. James the Great achieved the most wondrous of miracles: to unite Spain closely with the West

CLAUDIO SÁNCHEZ ALBORNOZ
Españoles ante la Historia (1958, "The Spanish and their History")

(Al-Mansur) in 997 and rebuilt in the eleventh century. The romanesque cathedral was built between 1075 and 1188.

It is difficult to date precisely the first pilgrimages to Compostela. The above account by Alfonso II is the first written evidence of such a "pilgrimage", and not long afterwards the faithful began to arrive in Compostela from all the provinces of northern Spain, forming a constant stream of pilgrims which continues to this day. According to the records, the first pilgrim from outside Spain was Godescale, Bishop of Le Puy in France, who travelled with his entourage to pray at Compostela 100 years after the visit of Alfonso II.

From this time on, most of the pilgrims were foreigners. People began to travel from all corners of Europe along the old Roman roads, and very soon specific routes were established and came to be known as the "road to Santiago".

The tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries were undoubtedly the Golden Age of the pilgrimage to Compostela, and a long line of distinguished figures came to pay their respects before the Saint's tomb. The pilgrimage of Charlemagne, however, is probably apocryphal. Similarly, accounts of a journey by St. Francis (around 1213) may well be unfounded, although numerous monasteries along the road to Compostela claim to have been founded by the "pauper from Assisi".

A long and hazardous journey

The pilgrims generally set off in groups from their home towns, and their departure was the occasion for much celebration, with the blessing of their obligatory apparel: cloak, beggar's bundle, staff, gourd and wide-brimmed hat. In the early days, the pilgrims returned home with a sea-shell to show that they had reached their goal. In time, this became a distinctive emblem, and pilgrims would even wear several shells, earning themselves the nickname "shell-wearers" from the Galicians.

Those who made the journey to Compostela left their families, responsibilities and livelihoods for between six months and two years, and faced such hazards as sickness, accidents or attacks. It has been estimated that at certain periods as many as half of the pilgrims never returned. Some simply decided to stop and settle down somewhere on the road, especially once they had reached Spanish territory. In many of the towns on the road to Compostela, quarters sprang up that were populated by foreigners who had settled there to ply their trades . Most of these settlers were French, and thus we find "French quarters" in Pamplona, Burgos, León and Compostela itself. Sometimes these "one-way" pilgrims would even set up their own towns called "Villafranca". An anonymous chronicler of the town of Sahagún described how "as the King had decided that a town should be constructed there, from all parts of the known universe thronged townsfolk of many and various trades, namely blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors furriers, cobblers, armourers and learned men from numerous and diverse provinces and realms, namely Gascony, Brittany, Germany, England, Burgundy, Normandy, Toulouse, Provence and Lombardy, and many other tradesmen conversing in various foreign tongues."

In the course of time, and principally in the wake of the Reformation, Compostela lost some of its importance. Nevertheless, a recent resurgence of religious zeal has again peopled the road to Compostela with thousands of pilgrims from all over the world.

From a marble column in the main portico of the cathedral of St. James of Compostela a magnificent statue by Master Matthew welcomes pilgrims as they approach the goal of their journey. According to an age-old tradition, visitors should place their right hand on the column as a sign of devotion to obtain the favour of the Saint. How many millions of hands have touched this marble column for it to be worn to a depth of a centimetre and a half? ■

A huge incense-burner is swung during the high mass held in the cathedral on St. James's day.

* *Historia Compostellana*, written by the canons of the cathedral of St. James of Compostela, Munio, Hugo and Girardus (11th century).

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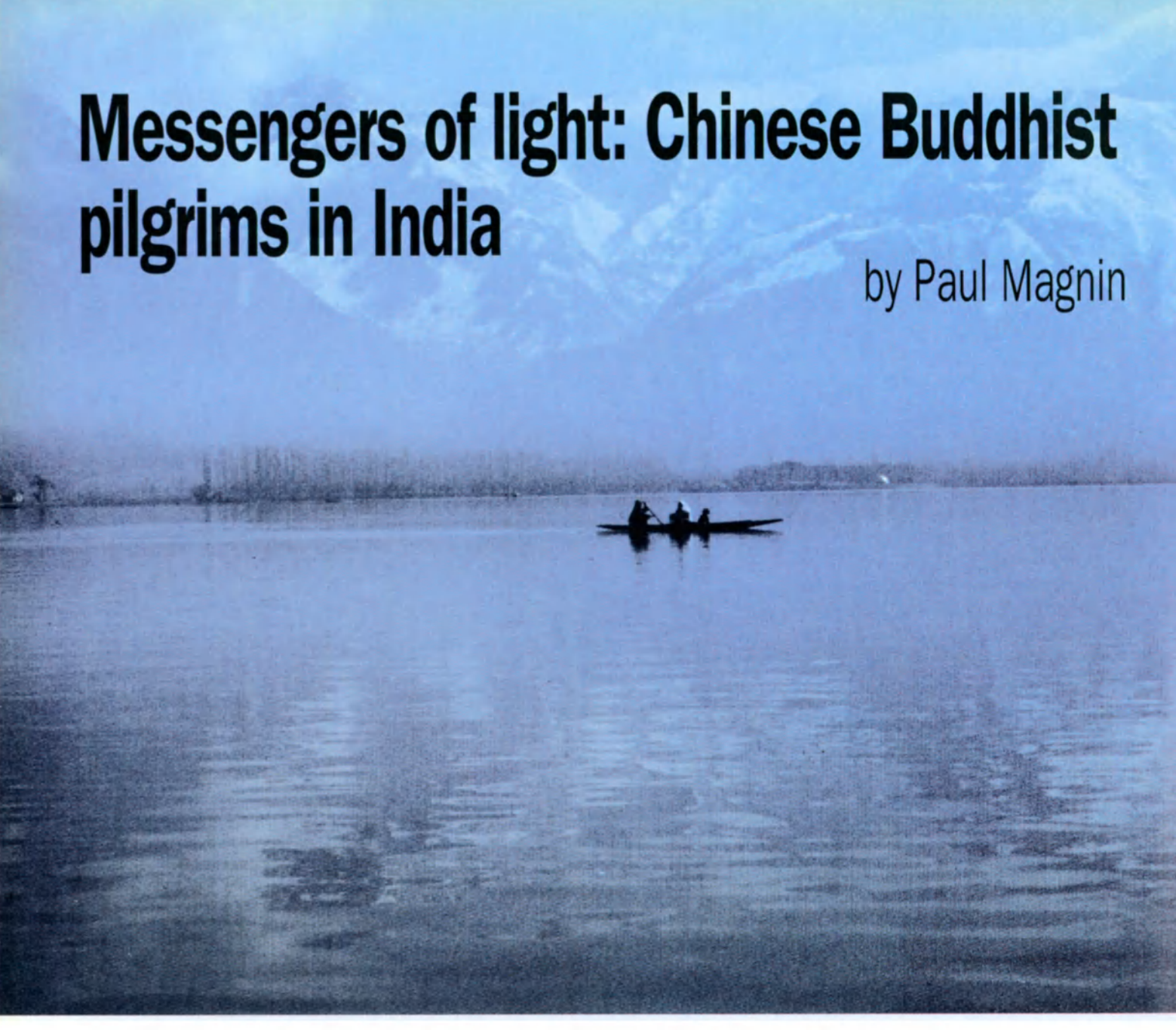
Messengers of light: Chinese Buddhist pilgrims in India

by Paul Magnin



Chinese monks embarked on a long and arduous journey when they sought instruction at the wellsprings of Buddhism

When Chinese Buddhist pilgrims set out for India on the "Western journey"—the title many of them gave to the record they kept of their travels—they could choose between three overland routes and a sea-route. Two of the overland routes passed through central Asia and corresponded to what since the nineteenth century has been widely known as the Silk Road, a portmanteau term used to describe the east-west trade routes that traversed the region. After crossing part of the arid Gobi Desert, the pilgrims had to choose between a northern and a southern route in order to avoid crossing the vast basin formed by the swampy regions of Lobnor, the Tarim Basin and the Taklamakan desert, which was notorious for its shifting sands.

The northern route skirted the Celestial Mountains (Tianshan) whose highest peaks were some 7,000 metres above sea level. This route took the pilgrims through staging-points and oases as far as Kashgar, which controlled access to the routes leading westwards to Ferghana and thence to Samarkand or the southwest. After leaving Kashgar, the pilgrims had to cross the Pamir mountains, the steep passes of the Karakoram range, Gilgit and the high valley of the Indus, before crossing the Burzil pass (over 4,000 metres high) on the road to what is now Srinagar, or skirting the Indus gorges and the Kagan valley to the city now known as Islamabad. Next they travelled through Kashmir into northern India and the central basin of the Ganges where most of the great Buddhist sites

Above, Lake Dal, near Srinagar, capital of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. In background, the rugged slopes of the Himalayas.

Right, a 10th-century painting on paper showing the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Huanzang (596-664). The painting originated from the Buddhist cave-temples of Dunhuang, hewn out of the cliffs in China's Gansu province.

associated with the life of the Buddha and the first Buddhist communities are situated.

For the sake of simplicity, let us follow each of the major routes through central Asia by retracing the steps of a famous Chinese pilgrim: Huanzang for the northern route, Faxian for the southern route, and Yijing for the sea route. Judging by their respective travel diaries, the principal mission of the three monks was to collect all the written and oral traditions, canonical or legendary, which could add to their knowledge of the Buddha's teachings and Buddhist religious practices, with a view to their use in China. This primary concern did not prevent them from observing the geography, the customs and behaviour of the many kingdoms through which they passed. Wishing to serve Buddha with the greatest possible detachment, they also became historians, geographers and sociologists.

Faxian's fifteen-year journey

Faxian (334-420) made a journey that marked the high point of the first wave of Chinese pilgrims in India. He left China in 399 and returned in 414. At this time Chinese Buddhists were searching for their identity. No longer satisfied with the incomplete and ambiguous texts which often came into their hands during the first centuries of the spreading of the "new religion", they felt a growing need to set out in search of texts that formed part of the Buddhist canon recognized by monks living in the land of the Buddha's birthplace.

Familiar with all the mysteries of the Buddhist doctrine, Faxian discovered that the texts belonging to the monks and faithful scholars had been scattered and mutilated as a result of quarrels between the small kingdoms of central Asia, the inevitable route which ideas circulating between the West and China had to take. Most of Faxian's journal, entitled *Foguo ji* ("An account of Buddhist Kingdoms"), described Buddhist rituals and ethics as he saw them. He also interpreted the basic notions of Buddhist teaching. Most of all Faxian wished to obtain a complete set of the Buddhist rules of discipline, or *vinayas,* which were sorely missing in China when he began his journey.

Thanks to the efforts of Faxian and other foreign pilgrims and monks who arrived in China around the same time as he returned there, at the beginning of the fifth century Chinese monks had access to *vinayas* of all the main schools of Indian Buddhism, to the founding sutras—the Lotus, Vimalakirti and Nirvana sutras—and also to the Amitabha Sutra, the fundamental scripture of the Pure Land Buddhist faith, and the Perfection of Wisdom sutra, from which the whole of Chinese Buddhism would draw inspiration.

Huanzang, the prodigal monk

Huanzang (596-664), who went to India in 629 by the route running north of the Taklamakan desert, is the best-known of all Chinese pilgrims. His fame is not only due to his great record of his travels, which has been translated into several Western languages, but also to Wu Cheng'en's novel, published around 1570 in the Ming Dynasty under the title *Hiyou Ji* ("Journey to the West"), which recounted the imaginary adventures of Huanzang and his strange companion, the monkey king Sun Wukong.

A native of Henan province, Huanzang took the vows at a monastery in Luoyang when he was thirteen years old. Famed for his erudition, he was extremely aware of the ambiguities and contradictions in the Buddhist texts used in the monasteries. To solve the problems involved in understanding these texts, he decided to go to India. In 629, without a travel permit from the Emperor, he left Chang'an by stealth and set out on the longest route that a pilgrim had hitherto taken.

Between 635 and 641, Huanzang travelled through India, visiting all the great Buddhist sanctuaries and teaching the doctrine of Mahayana (or "Great Vehicle") Buddhism. In 643, he decided to return to China by way of the Pamir mountains and the route running south of the Taklamakan desert. In 645 he arrived at the gates of Chang'an, the T'ang capital, where he received a tumultuous welcome from the population. With him was a twenty-horse caravan laden with texts, relics and icons destined to

While almost a hundred Chinese Buddhist pilgrims travelled to India, a number of Indian masters journeyed in the opposite direction in order to spread Buddhism in China. One of the best known of them was Bodhidharma (right), who reached Canton around 526. Here he is seen crossing the Yangtze on a reed.

enlighten the minds of his contemporaries and to increase their faith.

Not only did Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty forgive Huanzang for having left the country without a travel permit, he assigned him a team of collaborators, including the prime minister and several high officials, with instructions to translate the mass of Sanskrit Buddhist texts the pilgrim had brought back. The emperor appointed him Grand Master of the Temple of Benevolence *(Ci'en si)*, which was inaugurated in 648, and organized a magnificent ceremony at court to celebrate the event. It was on Huanzang's advice that the famous Pagoda of the Wild Goose was built in 652 to house all the Buddhist texts.

An influential figure in the history of Chinese Buddhism (he was responsible for around a quarter of all the translations of Sanskrit texts into Chinese), Huanzang was also the author of an important book, "Memoirs on the western regions during the period of the great Tang dynasty", which presented a wealth of detailed and precise data about the regions he had visited—their physical and human geography, their customs and economic life, and the situation of the Buddhist communities there. Huanzang also bequeathed to the Chinese the manuscript of a fine metaphysical and epistemological treatise, *Yogacaryabhumisastra* ("The Lands of the Yoga Masters").

Yijing's passage to India

The third great Chinese pilgrim to India was Yijing (635-713), who travelled there by boat. His journal is interesting for other reasons than those of his eminent predecessors in that he described the practical rules and institutions of Buddhist communities not only in India (although he went no further westward than Benares), but above all in southeast Asia, part of which was under the domination of the Sailendra dynasty based at Srivijaya. It was this dynasty which produced the magnificent sculptures of Borobudur in Java.

Yijing recorded all his observations in his *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* ("Account of Buddhism, sent from the South Seas"). This book and his "Memoirs" (see box below) should not make us forget that Yijing is also credited with the translation of more than fifty texts and that he introduced to the Chinese the longest and most detailed of the codes of discipline, the *vinaya* of the Mulasarvastivadin.

Yijing seems to have wanted to clear away any ambiguities that may have surrounded the pilgrims' intentions. "We are not looking for personal gratification," he wrote, "nor are we asking Heaven for posthumous glory. We have sworn to sacrifice this body exposed to dangers in order to search for the victorious doctrine. We all hope to satisfy our passion for spreading the Light."

Indifferent to honours and high living though they were, pilgrims still needed basic provisions. They took with them objects and

PILGRIMS IN PERIL

In the time that elapsed between Faxian and Huanzang, there were pilgrims who passed through the purple barrier (the Great Wall) and walked on alone; others crossed the great sea and travelled companionless. Not one of them failed to devote all his thoughts to the sacred vestiges of the Buddha or to prostrate himself to pay the ritual honours. All were intent on returning to express their gratitude to their father, their mother, the Tathagata (the Buddha) and their master in the law by spreading hope.

However the triumphal Way was hedged with difficulties; the holy places were faraway and vast. For the dozens who grew and flourished, and for several who dared, there was hardly one who bore fruits and gave real results. And there were few who completed their task!

The real cause was the immensities of the rocky deserts [leading to] the Land of the Elephant (Buddha and India), the great rivers and the brilliance of the sun which spits out its ardour; or the mass of water of the waves raised by the *makara*, a gigantic fish; the enormous gulfs and the waves which rise and swell up to the sky. Walking alone beyond the Iron Gates [a narrow path bordered by steep cliffs between Samarkand and Balkh], they travelled among ten thousand mountains and fell over precipices; navigating alone beyond the Copper Columns [erected by the Chinese General Ma Yuan in the year 42 at the border of China and the former Tonkin], they crossed the thousand rivers [an allusion to what are now Thailand and Cambodia] and some lost their lives. Others had no food for several days or ceased to drink for several mornings.

This is what it means to deny the principle of one's existence, to discard good health because of pain and weariness. This is why those who left were more than fifty in number; only a handful of men survived.

YIJING

Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan (689-692, "Memoirs written at the time of the Great Tang Dynasty on eminent religious men who went in search of the Law in the countries of the West").

The temple at Budd Gaya in India's Bihar state, one of the holiest places in Buddhism. It was there that Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha after meditating beneath a tree.

food products that could be exchanged en route. Many received substantial allowances from generous donors. Once equipped, they had to be prepared to face up to many natural hazards, difficult situations arising from revolts and wars between the different regions and kingdoms through which they traveled, as well as sickness, which claimed the lives of many of them and to which the youngest were not always the most immune. All these difficulties and risks were well known. The pressures on potential pilgrims were so great that some gave up at the last minute before setting out, while others dropped out before reaching their destination.

Places of worship and study

Chinese pilgrims stayed in India for a long period because they had so much to do and so many sites to visit as they followed in the Buddha's footsteps. Four holy places held particularly strong claims to their veneration.

They visited the Buddha's birthplace, in the Lumbini Park at Kapilavastu, where the celebration of his birth took place on the eighth day of the fourth month. Kapilavastu was also associated with the memory of the departure of the future Buddha when he stealthily left his family in order to seek the Way, an event celebrated on the eighth day of the second month. The third celebration was held on the 15th of the first month to venerate "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Truth" in the Deer Park, Mgrdava, northwest of Benares and now called Sarnath. It was there that the Buddha, shortly after his Enlightenment at Uruvela under the Bodhi tree, presented the essence of his experience of the Four Noble Truths to the five companions who had followed him in his life as a wandering ascetic. The fourth event, celebrated on the 15th of the second month, marked the Buddha's entry into complete extinction, *parinirvana*, in the woods of Sala.

Many Chinese monks also visited Nalanda, the chief centre for training in monastic life and the study of Buddhist texts. Yijing gave the Chinese a detailed description of it and suggested that they should build an imitation.

When they reached these sites associated with so many historical and sacred events, the pilgrims performed all kinds of rituals to express their veneration. Yijing's own conduct was an example of what the pilgrims achieved as they followed in the Buddha's footsteps.

One highly important aspect of the pilgrimage of Chinese monks to India that should not be forgotten is their quest for instruction by the best teachers, who could help them to achieve perfect understanding of the texts of the different schools of Buddhism. In order to derive as much benefit as possible from this teaching, many of the pilgrims studied Sanskrit so successfully that they won the acclaim of the Indian monks. After they had been in India for a time, many Chinese pilgrims were invited to preach and expound the great Buddhist texts in the local language. Kings, princes and the superiors of large monasteries organized important ceremonies at which the pilgrims preached. ■

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Pilgrimages in Judaism

by Nicholas de Lange

The ancient Jewish tradition of pilgrimage has survived many changes

Pilgrimage was "a duty laid on Israel". This legal obligation (*hoq*) is stipulated three times in the Torah, the foundation text of Judaism: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God" (Exodus 23,17; Exodus 34, 23; Deuteronomy 16, 16).

The three festive pilgrimages regulated the year of the Jews living in their land so long as the temple still stood in Jerusalem. They were held at key moments in the agricultural cycle, at the time of the three harvests in late spring (the Passover), midsummer (Pentecost) and early autumn (Tabernacles). Of these pilgrimages the last, falling immediately after the most solemn moment of the temple's year, the great expiatory gathering (*kippur* or Day of Atonement), came to be considered the most significant, and it was often known simply as "*the* festival" (*hag*—cf. Arabic *hajj*).

However, although strictly the duty to make the pilgrimage three times each year had, for male Jews, the status of a divine commandment, in practice it was regarded as a non-obligatory but highly meritorious act. While many Jews living within relatively easy reach of Jerusalem made the pilgrimage only occasionally, sources from the early Roman period describe the holy city as being thronged at each of the festivals with countless pilgrims (numbering over a million according to some accounts), many of whom had come from as far away as Babylonia (Iraq), Persia, Ethiopia, Anatolia and Rome.

This phase of the religious history of the Jewish people came to an abrupt end in the year 70 of the current era, when the temple was destroyed by the Roman army. It may seem extraordinary in retrospect that the Jewish religion was able to survive the definitive loss of its central institution. Presumably the destruction was not at first perceived as final, and the survival of Judaism was encouraged by the fact that an earlier destruction, by the Babylonians in 586 BCE (before the current era), had been followed by the building of a new temple on the same site some seventy years later. "Our holy and splendid temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned down, and our most precious possession is now a ruin". These ancient words of the prophet Isaiah were now recited by pilgrims to the site of the destroyed temple, whose joy was alloyed with bitterness. Henceforth the dominant mood of the pilgrims was one of grief and mourning.

The destruction of the temple

Even more bitterly humiliating was the fact that access to the holy city was not freely available: it was now in the hands of alien rulers. Sometimes the Jews were completely excluded from the city; even when they were allowed access the journey was difficult and dangerous, and there were heavy taxes to pay.

Apparently, despite all the hardships and humiliations, Jewish pilgrims kept on coming. After the Arab conquest in 638 conditions became much easier, and it seems that the numbers of pilgrims increased; some came to settle in Jerusalem, others just to visit. Those who were able brought gold for the maintenance of the Jewish community, for the relief of poverty and the upkeep of the scholars.

For a long time the history of the Jews in the Holy Land was shrouded in obscurity. Now, thanks to the astonishingly rich haul of medieval documents recovered from the Ben Ezra synagogue in Old Cairo (the so-called Cairo Genizah) many of the details have been filled in, and it has become clear that pilgrimage was an important facet of the religious life of the Jews. As in temple times, the preferred time of the year for pilgrimage was the autumn festival, and pilgrims came from far and wide: the Genizah documents mention pilgrims from Khurusan, Babylon, Egypt, Libya and the Maghrib, from Byzantium and even from France. Some of them

Celebrations at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem during Sukkot, a Jewish autumn festival also called the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths.

A model of the Old City of Jerusalem as it was at the time of the Second Temple (centre of photo).

went in fulfilment of a vow made at a time of distress. They prayed particularly on the Mount of Olives, outside the city to the east and facing the site of the temple; they also prayed at the gates of the city. At the end of the Festival of Tabernacles, in particular, a great gathering was held on the Mount of Olives.

The Wailing Wall

Jerusalem retained its sanctity throughout the centuries, and it received many famous visitors. Incidentally, it was under Ottoman rule that the spot which is especially venerated today acquired its status: the "Wailing Wall", or western retaining wall of the temple precinct. The wall itself is ancient, going back to Herod the Great, a Jewish king who restored and embellished the temple in the first century BCE; but according to tradition it was one of the early Ottoman sultans who cleared the area and allowed the Jews to pray and lament there. Though no formal rituals of pilgrimage are associated with it, this relic of the temple still attracts Jews, both young and old, traditionalist and more secularized: families come to celebrate the *bar mitzvah*, the moment when a boy becomes a man, and those in anxiety or distress thrust little notes into crevices in the wall.

In each period of Jewish history the significance of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem has been different. While the temple still stood, the pilgrimage was closely attached to the regular life and sacrificial worship of that institution, and to the belief that God was, in a real sense, present in the building, which was referred to as his "home". The pilgrim, in addition to offering his personal devotions and participating in an established communal ritual, was obeying the divine command to "see the face of the Lord". After the destruction of the temple, mourning and "sacred nostalgia" took over: lamenting the present desolation of the site, seemingly abandoned by God's presence (the *shekhina*) "because of our sins", the pilgrim cast his mind back to the past but also forward to the end of history, when the ram's horn would sound out to proclaim the age of the Messiah, accompanied by the return of the people to Jerusalem in a resumption of the mass pilgrimage, the rebuilding of the temple, and the resumption of sacrifices.

At the present time, there is no doubt that the vast majority of Jews throughout the world feel a very strong sentimental attachment to the Land of Israel and to the city of Jerusalem. Every year large numbers of Jews visit Jerusalem, and many of them take the opportunity to pray at the Wailing Wall. On the other hand, the term "pilgrimage" has gone out of fashion. Indeed, most books about Judaism, whether descriptive studies or manuals of religious practice, omit all mention of pilgrimage or refer to it briefly in connection with the three festivals as a ritual belonging to times long past.

The tombs of the prophets

There is another aspect to the subject of pilgrimage in Judaism, that leads us even further away from the official and universal forms of the

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Jewish pilgrims in the old synagogue at La Ghariba on the island of Djerba (Tunisia) take part in the annual celebration of Lag ba-Omer. The synagogue attracts pilgrims from many parts of the world.

religion. Within the holy city the site of the temple can lay claim to a sanctity that is close to the heart of millennial Judaism. But elsewhere in the holy land, and in many countries where Jews have lived since ancient times, there are lesser holy places that have long been the object of pilgrimage. Very often it is a tomb, associated with the name of a prophet or holy man (occasionally a holy woman); but sometimes it is a synagogue that is the object of pilgrimage, and very occasionally a movable object such as a scroll of the Torah.

Not far south of Jerusalem is the traditional site of the tombs of Abraham and his family at Hebron, which is also a Muslim shrine. Legend holds that four couples are buried there: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah, and also the first human couple, Adam and Eve. Pilgrims to Jerusalem have tended to include Hebron on their itinerary, and it is reckoned as one of the four "holy cities" (with Jerusalem, Tiberias and Safed).

It is in the north of Israel, however, that most of the holy sites are found. Indeed, parts of eastern Galilee, particularly around the holy cities of Tiberias and Safed, are dotted with tombs bearing the names of the great rabbis of the Talmud.

Of the many Jewish shrines of the Middle East, some of which are undoubtedly of very great antiquity, the most famous were traditionally the supposed tombs of the prophet Ezekiel at el-Kifl and of Ezra the Scribe at Kurna, both in Babylonia (modern Iraq). The Jews of Iran, who used to frequent these sites, also have their own shrines, many of which also carry associations with biblical heroes, notably the tombs of Esther and Mordecai and the prophet Zechariah at Hamadan, and the prophet Habbakuk nearby at Tuserkan. The Jews of Yezd, in response to dreams and vows, attend the shrine of the prophet Elijah at Nasrabad; other old shrines, such as the tombs of Daniel at Shushtar, Isaiah at Isfahan and Zippora near Qum, and of Abraham Ibn Ezra near Meshd, are no longer practicable for Jewish pilgrimage.

Egypt once had many sites of local pilgrimage, as we can see now from the documents of the Cairo Genizah. Old synagogues were visited, and by far the most popular sanctuary was the sanctuary (*miqdash*) of Dumuh or Dammuh, an abandoned site on the western bank of the Nile south of Cairo. Many Genizah documents refer to the pilgrimage (*ziyara*) to the "synagogue of Moses" at Dammuh, particularly after the time of Moses Maimonides and his son Abraham, who were particularly concerned with its upkeep. Besides synagogues and tombs, Egyptian Jews also venerated ancient scrolls of the Torah (there was one of these at Dammuh); this practice is found as far afield as Syria and Morocco.

In conclusion, mention must be made of the shrines of Morocco, where veneration of saints is a very marked feature of Judaism. Their shrines are dispersed all over the country, mainly in the Atlas Mountains but also along the coastal plain and in the eastern regions. A recent study managed to gather information about no fewer than 571 Moroccan Jewish saints (of whom twenty-one were women). More remarkable than this is the fact that many of the sites are traditionally visited by both Jewish and Muslim pilgrims; in some cases Jews visited Muslim marabouts; more commonly both visit Jewish shrines, or others where the allegiance of the saint is disputed between the two religions. With the resettlement of many Moroccan Jews in Israel, new shrines have sprung up there, to satisfy the religious needs and customs of the immigrants.

It would be misleading to leave the topic of Jewish pilgrimage here, with an impression of the ubiquity and religious intensity of pilgrimage rituals. It should be stressed that nowadays Jewish pilgrimage is more or less confined within the limits of the Land of Israel and the Muslim world. As the Muslim countries have recently been more or less emptied of their Jewish populations, the opportunities for pilgrimage have been much reduced. (Some shrines, such as the old synagogue on the island of Djerba in Tunisia, still manage to attract back some expatriates for the annual pilgrimage). In Europe, whatever may have been the situation in earlier times, pilgrimage is virtually non-existent, and most European Jews, or Jews of European origin, would not instinctively associate it with Judaism. Modernist Jewish theology has tended to insist that God is not to be understood as "present" in one place more than in any other, and to reject any need for the mediation of saints, or any "superstitious reverence for sacred spots". ■

Most of the holy sites are found in the north of Israel. Parts of eastern Galilee, particularly around the holy cities of Tiberia and Safed, are dotted with tombs bearing the names of the great rabbis of the Talmud.

Where the rivers meet

by Rustom Bharucha

At the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna rivers, millions of Indian pilgrims gather for the Kumbha Mela festival

At the heart of any pilgrimage in India, there is a confluence of waters. From the trickle of underwater springs through the more steady course of rivers and seas to the vista of the ocean, pilgrimages derive their sanctity from their proximity to water, and more specifically to the mingling of waters. *Tirtha*—the site of a pilgrimage—literally means a "ford" or a "crossing place".

In the city of Allahabad in northern India, at the *sangam* or confluence of the rivers Ganga and Jamuna, subtly layered by the "invisible" waters of the mythical river Saraswati, the holy city of Prayag once stood. To bathe in these waters is said to be one of the most cherished privileges for any Hindu regardless of his or her caste, class or community. More than an opportunity to wash away sins or to earn merit, this immersion in the waters offers the richest possibilities of rejuvenation and self-realization.

Historically, Prayag has been associated with bathing rituals and ceremonies which over the centuries have evolved into the Magha Mela, a religious festival which is celebrated every year in the month of Magha between January and February.

Underlying this festival is a myth which refers to the beginnings of creation when the gods and the demons were collectively involved in churning the nectar of immortality from the ocean. A fight ensued between these two parties over a pitcher (*kumbha*) of nectar that emerged from the primordial waters, along with other treasures. As the demons chased one of the gods in possession of the *kumbha*, we are told that a few drops of nectar fell on four places in our world: Hardvar, Ujjain, Nasik and Prayag. These are the four *tirthas* in which a great festival known as the Kumbha Mela takes place once every three years in rotation over a twelve-year cycle. Twelve years, we are told, because it took twelve days for the gods to protect the *kumbha* in their cosmic flight, and twelve divine days are equivalent to twelve earthly years.

Below, massed pilgrims at the confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna at Allahabad during the Kumbha Mela festival in 1989.

The *mela* or fair held at Prayag (or *Tirtharaja* as it is often called, literally king of the *tirthas*) is particularly dynamic. Here on the banks of the Ganga and the Jamuna where the waters have receded, millions of pilgrims congregate not only to bathe but to engage in trade, witness religious performances and dare-devil acts, and listen to sermons and the sales-pitch of vendors and mountebanks. This most concentrated of sacred spaces also accommodates a great celebration of everyday life, so much so that one is tempted to view the Kumbha Mela in Prayag as a transcendence of ordinariness rather than a summation of the extraordinary. Here we find "India" in all its multiple dimensions and heterogeneous identities, where the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor can share the same consecrated ground with an unselfconscious solidarity.

Sacred and profane

Before the first glimmers of dawn, the pilgrims arrive in droves, entire families and communities from the far corners of India with pots and pans, earthenware stoves, buckets and bedding, all piled one on top of the other, balanced in precarious equilibrium. As the pilgrims enter the camping grounds of the *mela*, they circumambulate labyrinths of dusty, triangular, canvas tents—thousands of makeshift edifices silhouetted in an omnipresence of dust. As these children of Ganga move purposefully towards the confluence of waters—they know where they are going with an almost intuitive knowledge—they become part of a vast sea of humanity seemingly without beginning or end.

From a distance, you see these eddies of people moving in circuitous lines (as always in India, you realize emphatically that lines are never straight but a continuous series of dots). As the eddies flow and separate and merge rather like tributaries in a river, you are almost afraid to enter their devious currents. But even before you have completed your thought, you find yourself wading into the depths where you become part of a surging humanity in which strangely—and inexplicably—you are free to be yourself.

Despite the rules and regulations enshrined by the *shastras* (religious texts) concerning the rules of pilgrimage—fasting, offering ceremonial rites or *puja*, maintaining celibacy and purity of mind and thought—there is always space in this sacred order for blessings and intimations received in solitude. No one was more painfully denied this condition than Mahatma Gandhi who, on his visit to the Kumbha Mela in Hardvar in 1915, was so besieged by seekers of *darsan*—the opportunity to see a holy person—that he found no time for his inner self. No wonder then that he complained almost like a foreigner about the oppressiveness of the *mela*; the "absentmindedness, hypocrisy and slovenliness" of the pilgrims, the venal *sadhus* (holy men), and the barbarity of such grotesque sights as a five-legged cow.

If the pilgrimage does not induce an inner state of being, it can easily become chaos, a living inferno, or it can degenerate (as it so often does) into a mere spectacle, a theatrical extravaganza. As much as one is compelled to respond to the hyper-reality of the *mela*—the sheer

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A multitude of meetings with millions of people and one's self

dynamics of millions of people sharing a specific place and time—the raison d'être of the pilgrimage is not to see (as in a spectacle) but to simply *be*. The topography and panorama of Prayag can be dissolved into an inner state of being. More elusively, it can be concentrated in the body and being of another pilgrim, who can be worshipped as a *tirtha*, as Prayag itself.

A recurring enigma in sacred geography is its transference of space, so that Prayag is also to be found in many other *tirthas*—the foothills of the Himalayas, Benares, a shrine on a street. In other words, the *tirtha* is capable of travelling, not unlike the *mela* which can filter into everyday life long after its auspicious timeframe has ceased. It is this fluidity that prevents the *mela* from being centralized, homogenized, bureaucratized, despite recent attempts by the state to regiment its space.

A celebration of life

What needs to be emphasized, however, is that the *mela* is not a carnival. Instead of reversing the existing social order (and thereby reinforcing the status quo), the *mela* enhances the existing order and then transcends it. What is being celebrated in the *mela*, therefore, is not anti-structure but the structure of life itself with all its hierarchies, disparities and distinctions, which are allowed to coexist on the same ground. Far from being an officially sanctioned deviation from the rules of everyday life, it is an expansion of life's possibilities.

Yet fear infiltrates one's very desire to enter the time-space of the *mela* at very bourgeois levels. One has to rebuke these fears of disease and theft, go beyond them, almost laugh at the rumours of stampedes and terrorist attacks that hang in the air. *Melas* are anti-bourgeois sites of experience. They are not for the timorous or faint-hearted. Even with all the amenities of "cultural tourism" which have made pilgrimages more comfortable, the *mela* challenges bourgeois notions of security.

Despite the need to protect the mammoth environment of the *mela*—in Prayag, the security provided by the police and the military is increasingly visible—there is something faintly ridiculous in attempting to "discipline" the tumultuous energies of the pilgrims. Their mingling of social, cultural and human identities functions on such a vast scale that it is not one community that is being celebrated, but a multitude of meetings with millions of people and one's self. So epic are the contours of the *mela* that they are almost impossible to frame; so private is the privilege of immersing one's self in the waters of Prayag that the moment defies representation. In the harmonious cacophony of this largest religious gathering in the world—the loudspeakers blare through the night announcing children lost who will almost invariably be found—there is silence.

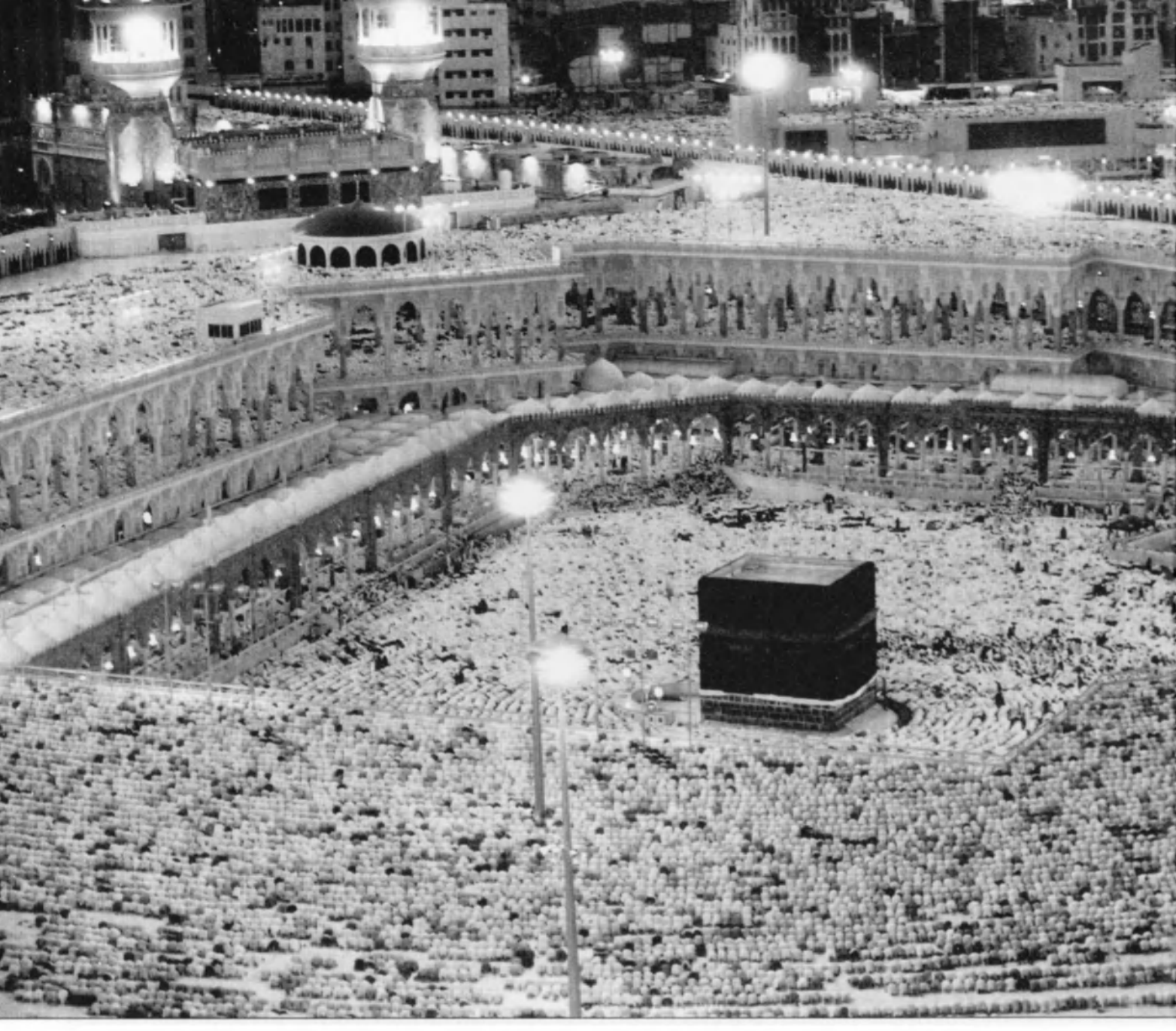
One needs to remember the inner myth of Prayag in order to counter the recent attempts by fundamentalists and communalist parties to appropriate its sacred space in the name of Hindutva. The *mela*, one should keep in mind, has its own indigenous hierarchies and modes of socialization that are not likely to accept the strictures of a new administration advocating a centralized view of Hinduism. Somehow one is compelled to accept that the confluence of energies, symbolized by the intermingling of the Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati, has the power to absorb any political ideology attempting to rule in the name of religion.

Centuries of faith cannot be removed overnight. Or more precisely, the sheer heterogeneity of faiths that have evolved over the years cannot be reduced to a uniform code of conduct and belief. Prayag teaches us more than tolerance or a passive faith in coexistence. From its multitudinous configurations and interactions, we can learn the vitality of living with difference. ■

"Before the first glimmers of dawn, the pilgrims arrive in droves, entire families and communities from the far corners of India." Left, the Kumbha Mela festival at Hardvar (Uttar Pradesh).

Above right, purification in the waters of the Ganges at Nasik (Maharashtra), one of the four places where the Kumbha Mela festival is held. For Hindus, the Ganges is a sacred river in which every believer must bathe at least once in his or her life.

A Brahman, a member of the Hindu priestly class, reads the sacred scriptures on the banks of the Ganges.



The heart's infinity

by Abdelwahab Meddeb

The visit to the Kaaba is the crowning moment of the great pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the three holy cities of Islam. In the mystic tradition it is identified with the heart. Here a modern pilgrim describes his innermost feelings.

A mere speck in the crowd, I follow the human tide and enter the sacred domain. The Kaaba looms up, a cube in a black dress with eye-catching fringes and a headband of calligraphy in gold letters.

It is a great shock. I come closer to the black Kaaba, making my way through the dense white-robed crowd that throngs the vast courtyard.

I realize that I am in the spot where sense of direction disappears. Wherever I was in the world, from east to west and north to south, I directed my gaze towards the *qibla*, the target of prayers: here, wherever I stand, the Kaaba is in plain view, and from every side it makes this *qibla* visible. No need to find the right direction: it is for the pilgrim to make for himself the square that will receive his prostrate form, and his prayer will be accepted.

Such is the Kaaba, a black-robed cube petitioned by requests since ancient times, by a myriad entreaties renewed down the centuries,

In Mecca (Saudi Arabia), pilgrims gather round the Kaaba, the cubical shrine that stands in the vast courtyard of the Great Mosque and has the famous Black Stone of Mecca embedded in its masonry. The Kaaba is the point towards which Muslims all over the world orient themselves to pray. Wearing sacred garments, the pilgrims circumambulate the shrine seven times.

bombarded by all the world's *mihrabs*, apses pointing their blind walls towards it—blind, yet opened by the pilgrims' eyes. O Kaaba, so ancient and yet daily rejuvenated by the eyes that converge on you from every side! How many words in every tongue have saturated your black dress and nourished your walls and stone foundations! You are made of stone, you grow out of the bedrock that is rooted in your foundations, always adopting a humble posture, only suffering to be raised up when driven by a will that is alien to it.

Rabi'a, the great eighth-century woman Sufi, said: "O Kaaba, idol worshipped on earth, never has He entered into it, yet never has He left it." Obsessed by this paradox, I go towards this cube, which embodies belief in a God at once present and absent, visible and unportrayable, palpable and transcendent, near and remote. This is why His vocation is to be solicited in the third person, which is how Rabi'a, like all Sufis, speaks to Him.

I know that by my movement I revive the myth. Under the burning sun I make my way through the white throng. I know that I am nearing the Temple, the Abode: I am a pilgrim, I direct my steps towards it. All my energy is absorbed by such a target.

I draw nearer still. I enter the circles of the Kaaba. I wish to hurry during the first three circumambulations, as the ritual prescribes, and so as to escape the destiny of the marks inscribed within me, to efface them and to hasten my entry into a new beginning.

An inner thought sprouts within me, and directs me towards the solution of the paradox propounded by the great Rabi'a. The Kaaba cannot contain Him as much as the human heart. Faced with this revelation, I exult. Half laughing, half crying, I feel that I am nearing the cube. On one side I receive its shade. I honour my circumambulations, whilst continuing to hearken to my inner conversation. The human heart is an inner temple far greater than the heavens and the earth. Nothing equals the heart's infinity. The thoughts that now come to me melt and spread as they orbit my heart: they are like the people who circle the Temple with me.

A gold tablet in an unknown script

God deposited a treasure in the Kaaba. The Prophet wanted to get hold of it and spend it. Then he repented and left it where it was hidden. The second caliph, 'Umar, also tried to dig it out, but turned away from this plan and remained true to his imitation of the Prophet. This treasure is still lodged within the Kaaba: I can see tiny gleams from it. I recall an anecdote told by the Andalusian theosophist Ibn 'Arabi. When Ibn 'Arabi was in my dear city of Tunis in the year 1201, he received a cracked gold plate out of this treasure, one finger thick, one span wide and a little bit longer, containing a script unknown to him. But Ibn 'Arabi refused to accept this sample, and asked for it to be put back in its place. He too wanted to comply with the Prophet's example, as was fitting. He knew that it was no accident that the Prophet had decided not to touch it. He reckoned that if he had used it, blind sedition would have ravaged the universe. Only the Mahdi who was to herald the end of time could possess it.

Bit by bit the parallel between the Kaaba as the human heart and as the Throne of God grows stronger. In this sense the Kaaba is like a double display screen: on the one hand it displays man's interior and everything recorded or inscribed thereon, on the other the next world, metaphysical space. The Kaaba represents this twofold extension into the unseen: it is the link between the inwardness of the initiate and the celestial theatre.

It is very hot. The sun holds sway. The white of the vestments and the marble under foot make the light more dazzling, more glaring. I am still circling the Kaaba. I am elated. I think of what awaits me for my pilgrimage to be complete and for myself to be born again. I observe the heroism such a visit demands. And I cannot repress the image of Hallaj that comes to me from long ago in the ninth century, when the martyr-to-be was discovered at Mecca, not far from the Temple precinct, sitting on a boulder in full sun, with sweat streaming down him so that the rock was wet. A witness who saw him thus noted his proud, heroic emulation of the Absolute, and predicted to this Sufi the fate that

Right, pilgrims exhausted by the heat refresh themselves with a little shade and water.

I know that I am nearing the Temple, the Abode: I am a pilgrim, and I direct my steps towards it. All my energy is absorbed by such a target.

would be his: such a path can lead only to death. The door of excess unlocks the house of sacrifice. Challenging excess is fatal. I ask myself: am I going to melt in this sun? No, I am protected by whiteness, ally of the angelic host.

I want it to be night, not only because night would provide a respite, a rest, but also because it would confirm the very name of the Temple. It was not by a whim that it was named "the Abode". In order to confirm the correctness of this name you feel a compelling urge to *abide* there by night, to sleep in the sacred precinct, so as to view the truthful visions on the stage of your dreams: also so as to be introduced, through the analogy of sleep, on to that other stage that creaks under your ghostly feet—the stage of the other world. Should we not be ready to decipher whatever presents itself to our minds and feelings through the manifestation of the occult? Great spiritual experiences have often come about in pitch darkness. Darkness is favourable to perception and clairvoyance. The Prophet's celestial journey, his ascension into the heavens, his scaling of the ladder—all that happened by night. It was in the middle of the night that he was enabled to go to the limits of perception, to the lotus-tree of the end. It is said also that God comes down from His throne at night.

Waiting for nightfall

Waiting for nightfall, I try to perfect my knowledge of the Temple by following the ritual. I realize that when I know the Temple I shall know my true self. How many return journeys there are between the Temple and the heart! The stations of the pilgrimage correspond to the effort to be made on oneself, to introspection, to the exercise that probes a person's inner discourse.

I know that in putting off my clothes I put off all possessions; in ridding myself of sewn garments I disencumber myself. I feel at home in a setting of simplicity, and turn away from complexity; I wash and purify myself. To do this I go into the bath-house: and there I find the darkness in which mysteries are revealed. There I achieve the experience of death; I have a forestaste of the other world: collective nudity puts me in a sort of rehearsal for the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. In this hot and humid place I shall from the outset and in advance have known the two features that structure a living person.

Like the ground plan of the Temple, the pilgrimage rests on four foundations: circumambulation of the Kaaba, preceded by consecration (resulting, I repeat, from purification and the wearing of a white sheet, a living person's shroud), then the halt at Arafat and the race between Safa and Marwa.

Revolve around me!

The halt at Arafat brings perfection of knowledge (as its name indicates: *arafa* means "to know"). The halt is in the profane part: it is outside the area covered by the domain of the forbidden. The pilgrimage, in its various stages, takes place via the dialectic between the sacred and the profane, between the prolongation of a prohibition and its cancellation. In this profane area communal prayer takes place: the pilgrims find each other in disarray, their hair dishevelled, covered with dust, stripped of all sewn garments, bare-headed, standing until their heels are sore, bereft before Him. Their reading will be secret, internal, whispered: it is spoken from self to self, in silence, in the crowd, so that He may speak to each one personally, intimately, secretly, on the journey of the inner voice, within.

Between Safa and Marwa I hurry from one state to another: from sadness (caused by remorse) to the gift of self. At the bottom of the valley I go fast, I run, so as to stay as short a time as possible in this low-lying place, the abode of Satan. Here, where stone reigns supreme, the twofold truth of stone is revealed to me: on the one hand it is from between the stones that the spring gushes out (and water is the life principle), on the other hand stone is the only being that always seeks out the low point, i.e. bondage and refusal to emulate God's plans. Stone does not rise up of itself, and if it is lifted up an irresistible force drags it downwards. These two truths I adopt in the heart's refuge.

With a heart ready for the invention of my Lord, I shall proceed to the seven circumambulations (on arrival, in the middle of my stay, and to complete my farewell) for the first three circuits I shall walk fast; for the last four I shall go at a normal steady gait. As I circumambulate I shall liken myself to the barefoot angels that revolve around the Throne.

I also recall that the Kaaba spoke to Ibn 'Arabi in articulate speech. It said to him: "Revolve around me!" Centuries later, it repeats these same words to me. Water from the spring Zemzem (which gushed out before Hagar and Ishmael in the middle of the desert) spoke also to me in audible words. It said to me: "Drink, slake thy thirst, refresh thyself, take thy fill of my water!"

I recall to mind the long sequence that made up the special link between Ibn 'Arabi and the Kaaba. One cold night with a full moon the

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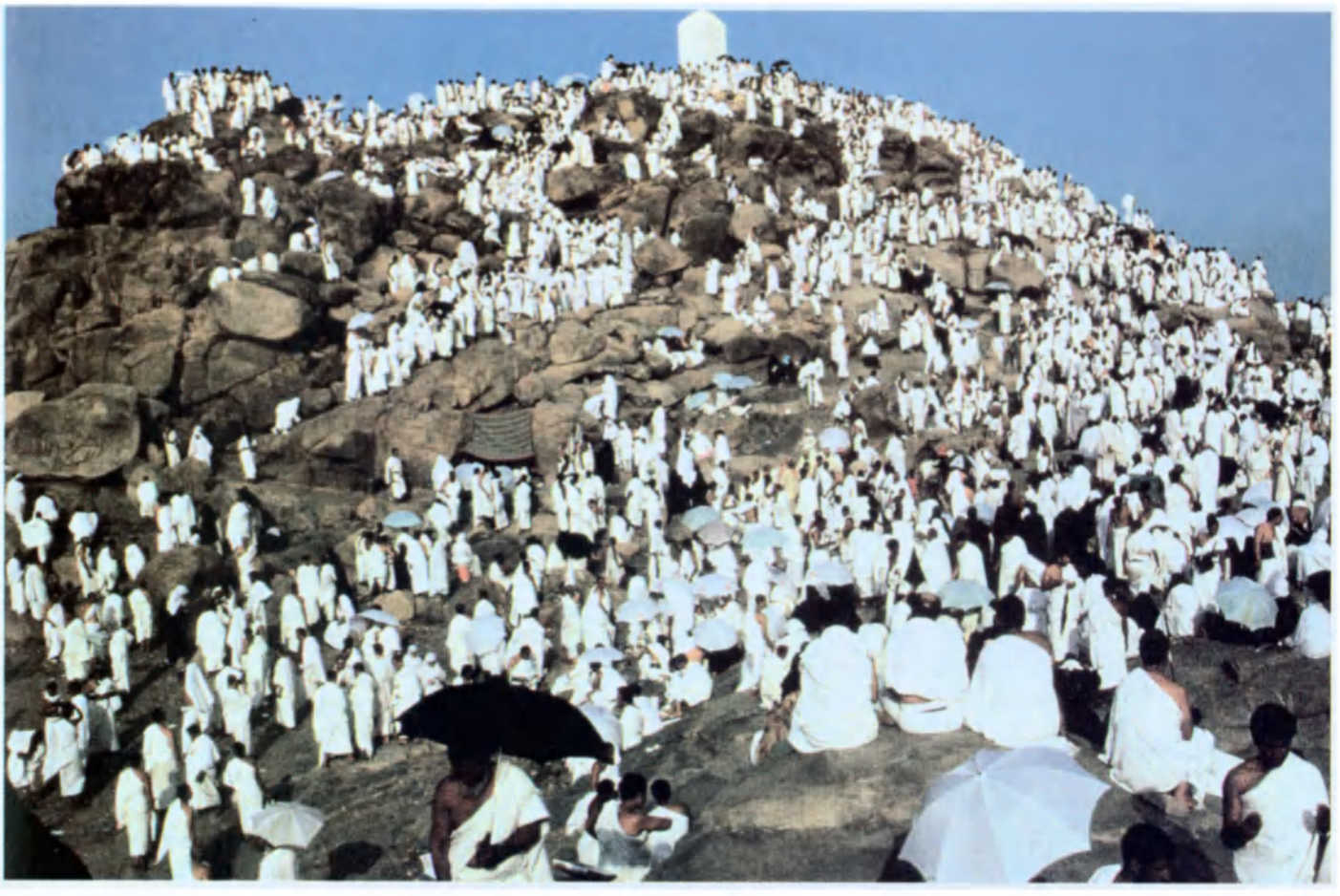


Pilgrims on Mount Arafat near Mecca.

Sufi got up: beset by a state of great perplexity, he could not sleep. He made his ablutions and went out. The night was damp, and the fine moon was lightly veiled by a sort of curtain of dew. Ibn 'Arabi made for the precinct, and went into the courtyard where the Kaaba stands. Only one person was there, and a strange tension vibrated in the air; the Sufi felt highly uneasy, and decided to place himself in the path of the circumambulations.

Let us strain our ears and listen.

"That night I came down, kissed the Stone and began to circumambulate. When I was opposite the drain-pipe, behind the Stone, the Kaaba lifted its dress, rose up above its base, and then pushed me away. It would not allow me to circle around it, and spoke to me in a sharp voice. I was afraid, nay more: I was seized with great terror. To take refuge and avoid its aggressiveness, I sheltered behind the stone as behind a shield, for it was hitting me fierce blows. In the end it shouted angrily: 'Take one step forward if thou durst, and thou wilt see what thou wilt see. So dost thou prefer initiates and famous men? Dost thou prefer them to me? By God, never will I allow thee to circle around me!'

"Gradually I lost the fear that had paralysed me. I calmed down. The Kaaba had torn itself up from the ground, and had lifted its dress as a person does when trying to get up from a sitting position. So it appeared to me. It had lifted its dress in order to pounce on me. I quickly improvised some lines of verse, I talked to it, I recited my celebration, my eulogy. My rhymed, rhythmical words placated its wrath; my panegyric made it subside on to its foundations again. It was happy with the words I heard. It returned to its place and gave me its trust once more. It gave me the order to resume my circumambulations.

"Then I threw myself on the Stone and kissed it again; I was moved, and trembled in all my limbs. I was dumbfounded, and had to make a great effort to impart to it the declaration of Oneness: 'There is no God but God.' These words came out of my mouth in the form of a thread. The Black Stone opened like a wardrobe, and I saw the bottom of it. Its depth measured one cubit, and my testimony rolled itself up into a ball and ensconced itself at the bottom of the Stone, which closed up again. Then the Kaaba said to me: 'This is a forfeit: I will give it back to you on the Day of Judgment.' Since then, peace has been concluded between us."

All this ecstasy, all these hallucinations and sublimations unfolded in my head, and delighted me. What pictures, what thoughts taken from the memory and the corpus of all those who down the centuries have borne witness and bequeathed their evidence to posterity, so that we might have them to enjoy in our beliefs and unbeliefs! ■

COMMENTARY BY

Unfettered freedom

The exercise of the right to freedom of expression fully demonstrates the two dimensions of freedom: the absence of arbitrary power, and the ability to express oneself.

The first dimension—the absence of despotic pressure or physical or intellectual coercion—should be seen in terms of the "real limits of freedom". In this sense, freedom is the area of autonomy every human being enjoys within the various kinds of limits—structural, institutional, social, cultural, economic and political—that define his or her existence and impose constraints on it.

But it would be wrong to regard freedom as a negative concept, as an absence of constraints, as what is left when oppression ceases. Freedom is, or should be, the *capacity to, the power to do* something. The Spanish thinker Julián Marías summed the matter up splendidly when he wrote that "true freedom is not... an absence of restrictions but a real opportunity to make projects and to carry out those projects in one's life.... In English, the expressions *freedom from* and *freedom to* accurately describe these two aspects of freedom.

In many world regions the breaking of the chains of tyranny and removal of oppressive structures are not enough to ensure that citizens fulfil their desire for genuine freedom and a dignified life. This combination of freedom and capacity is implicit in the debate about formal freedom and real freedom. On the threshold of a new millennium, and after the immense changes of the past few years, we can more clearly appreciate that one of the major challenges of the coming century will be to ensure that it will be really possible for formal rights to be exercised; in other words that unfettered freedom will be accompanied by the capacity to make full and effective use of it.

Perhaps in no other field of human activity is this truth more obvious than in that of freedom of expression, especially freedom of the press. In journalism, something more than the absence of censorship or threats is needed if professionals are to do good work. Material resources and the right social conditions are also required for the exercise of the right to free speech.

Above all, the mass media must function independently and objectively; otherwise they will lose the reason for their existence. Here there is no place for ambiguities or appearances: facts are the only things that count. And the context is a highly complex one in which it is sometimes virtually impossible to see the pattern of cause and effect. We are talking about freedom to write and to describe. When we write, we put our own freedom on the line; when we describe, other people's freedom is at stake. The reader, the person at the receiving end, is both a mirror and a reference point. The media cannot use technological and financial reasons as an excuse for consigning to irrelevance or anonymity the unique protagonist: the human being, the journalist, the person writing his or her thoughts or describing an event.

Access to ideas

Even when the mass media succeed in preserving independent judgment, the latter is not in itself a guarantee of "objectivity", which is the result of a complex set of geographical, ideological, historical and cultural factors. The very act of choosing which news and opinions are or are not worth publishing is highly subjective. This can be clearly seen by comparing the space currently devoted to victims of the war in Bosnia—because it is a wound in the very heart of Europe—with the scant coverage being given to events in Angola and Afghanistan, where the number of victims may be far higher. Distance and spectacular events condition editorial choice, which is not always made on the grounds of what might be called "global equity", even in the most independent media. Another example is the attention devoted by the mass media to two of the major problems of our time, the Middle East and South Africa.

Freedom, capacity, independence and objectivity are but a few of the many different issues today at stake in the world of the press. This complexity is inextricably linked to the scientific and technological development of our civilization and to the extension of civil rights to the great majority of our citizens, in

short to democracy. On the one hand, the tools of transmission are becoming more varied and sophisticated (from printing to satellite television and information superhighways) as a result of scientific and technological progress. On the other, the moral conscience of our time leads us to attach indisputable value to the idea that this development should be shared, that it is only justified if more and more people benefit from it. We have to be aware that, alongside the superhighway, there is a "small way", a "downway" that plays an extremely important part in shaping the world's awareness of what is happening and, above all, why it is happening.

One of the great contradictions of our time is the fact that, whereas the world's most prosperous regions are entering the era of interactive television, faxes and satellite communication, there are still 600,000 villages without electricity and over 800 million illiterate people in the world. Our moral sense—stimulated by, among other things, the very development of the mass media—prevents us from becoming resigned to this monstrous situation. What the French sociologist Raymond Aron called "the Promethean ambition" of our time is this very desire to reconcile political freedoms with equitable and sustained development that will provide all citizens with the economic and social resources necessary for self-fulfilment. Freedom of expression, like the mass media, cannot be the privilege of a few: they must be accessible to all.

The Preamble to UNESCO's Constitution states that the promotion of peace and mutual understanding between peoples calls for "full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge". For almost half a century UNESCO has endeavoured to promote those ideals, convinced that to do so is to build bridges of understanding and solidarity and to help "construct the defences of peace in the minds of men". Article I of UNESCO's Constitution refers to communication as the principal instrument for carrying out this task, when it says that UNESCO will "promote the free flow of ideas by word and image". This is a crucial mission and a difficult one—it was especially so at the time when we lived in the shadow of two superpowers and the nuclear arms race. As a result its fulfilment has been marked by side-tracking, setbacks and misunderstandings.

In the 1970s and until the mid-1980s UNESCO, in the light of the work carried out by the Commission chaired by Sean MacBride, discussed the requirements of what was known as the New World Information and Communication Order. That policy—which some countries thought interventionist and inimical to freedom—led to a full-scale crisis in UNESCO and was a key factor in the withdrawal, in 1985, of the United States and, shortly afterwards, of the United Kingdom. UNESCO solved the problem definitively in 1989 by adopting a "new strategy" which adheres unreservedly to Article 1. Freedom is like the sea: neither doors nor fences can withstand it. There should be no restrictions on freedom. But at the same time, through an international programme to develop all aspects of communication (IPDC), action was taken to develop the capacity to exercise this freedom to the full.

'Technological minority'

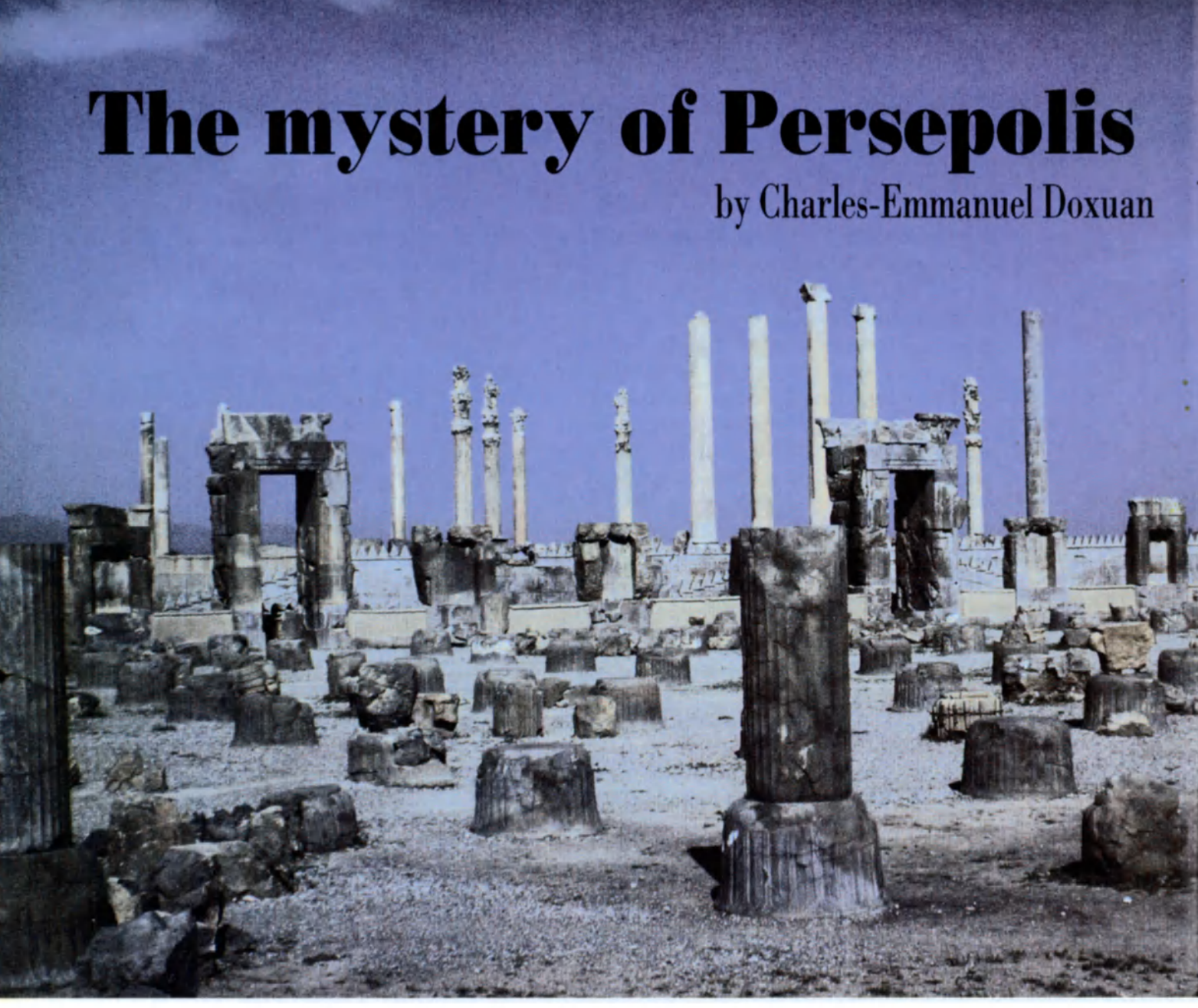
Some of the countries then opposed to UNESCO's project, which they considered to be "interventionist", are now feeling the impact of violence, including cultural violence, from the ubiquitous media and are exploring the possibility that UNESCO could protect them against "electronic interference" from their neighbours. I am not only thinking of the Third World. Some governments in Europe are extremely anxious about neighbouring countries transmitting television programmes that offend the feelings of their inhabitants.

To my mind, a new concept is emerging—the concept of "technological minority". A large country with hundreds of millions of inhabitants can be a minority from the technological point of view, if its space—the third frontier—can be dominated by instruments that vehicle, beyond its control, other ways of living, thinking and behaving, other concepts and models. The reaction—as we have seen in the case of GATT—is usually one of protectionism—a retreat into the fortress instead of openness, competition, association, interaction and harmony. This is what happens to all minorities when they forget that endogamy is synonymous with decline.

Our position has been—and will continue to be—that this matter falls strictly within the competence of national parliaments and that UNESCO—as an institution belonging to the United Nations system—respects the sovereign decisions concerning it taken by each state. The "great march towards democracy"—which to my mind is the most important process of our time—is a guarantee that, in the name of the peoples, measures will gradually be adopted that are best suited to the diversity and unity of each of them. ■

The mystery of Persepolis

by Charles-Emmanuel Doxuan



"Just as Persepolis had surpassed other cities in prosperity, so too it surpassed them in misfortune!" With these words the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus commented on the destruction of the Achaemenid holy city in 330 B.C., two centuries after its foundation by Darius the Great. The fall of Persepolis symbolized the end of the immense Persian empire that Cyrus the Great and his successors had carved out from the Nile to the Indus.

The city fell without a fight to Alexander the Great's cavalry, who found there an amazing treasure trove: 40,000 silver talents and such a profusion of riches that, according the Greek historian Plutarch, at least 10,000 pairs of mules and 5,000 camels were needed to carry them away. Darius III, the last Achaemenid king, had taken refuge in Ecbatana after suffering a bloody defeat at Alexander's hands at Gaugamela, close by the ruins of the ancient Nineveh. At least for the time being his forces presented no serious threat to the conquerors. So why did Alexander raze Persepolis?

Had not Babylon, which had also opened its gates to the young emperor, been spared? And at Susa Alexander had sat on Darius's throne without spilling a drop of blood. . . .

FIRE AND SWORD

It is true that Alexander's army had had to fight a hard battle at the pass of the Persian Gates, which was defended by 40,000 men under the command of Ariobarzanes, the satrap of Persia. Later, as the troops marched across the plain, they saw straggling towards them a raggamuffin band of 800 old Greek prisoners, most of them horribly mutilated. They had been left with only their "useful" limbs, i.e. those needed to carry out the tasks assigned to them. Feelings had run high in the Greek ranks.

When most of the army joined Alexander in Persepolis, a council of war was held at which the conqueror came out in favour of looting the city and destroying it. Parmenio, one of his lieutenants, tried to dissuade him. Why should he destroy something that now belonged to him? And why run the risk of rekindling local resistance by a wanton act of cruelty? Alexander rejected his arguments but agreed to spare the royal buildings. Thus the residential part of the city was abandoned to the ferocity of the Greek soldiers. The Roman historian Quintius Curtius Rufus, author of *The History of Alexander*, tells how the Persian leaders, dressed in their finest robes, threw themselves from the tops of their walls or burned themselves alive in their houses rather than fall into the hands of their enemies. Bands of soldiers ran in every direction, slitting the throats of their prisoners or killing one another when they fought over the

Royal residence and spiritual capital of the Persian empire, Persepolis (Takht-e Jamshid in present-day Iran) came to a tragic end when it was destroyed by Alexander the Great. Excavations on the site, which was abandoned for many centuries, have yielded a mass of information about Achaemenid Persia. Persepolis was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1979.

Above, the Hall of a Hundred Columns occupies a large part of the northeastern terrace at Persepolis.

Above right, the king is shown fighting a lion in this detail from a door in the Hall of a Hundred Columns.

UNESCO IN ACTION
HERITAGE

plunder. The carnage lasted several days.

Persepolis's misfortunes were not yet over, however. Back in the city after a swift expedition against a mountain people, the Mardi, Alexander decided to march against the remnants of the Persian army. Before sending his phalanxes onto the road to the northwest, he offered his entourage a magnificent banquet. It was held on the very spot where the Great Kings of Persia had entertained their guests, on the vast stone terrace where stood the palaces and gardens that had been saved by Parmenio's supplications. Wine flowed in rivers, and it was not long before everyone was drunk. Suddenly Thaïs, an Athenian courtesan famed for her beauty and quick wit, began to harangue the crowd, urging them to burn the palace of Xerxes, who had once destroyed her native city, and thus avenge Greece. Her words were greeted with a roar of approval, and Alexander, swept along in the general enthusiasm, grabbed a torch and led the crowd on its way. The revellers made their way to all the palaces of the royal city and, to the sound of flutes and pipes, set fire to anything that would burn.

It is a moot point whether or not Alexander really intended to go so far. Although Plutarch seems to suggest that an outburst of orgiastic madness took place, he does not say so categorically. The historians of antiquity each give their own version. What is certain is that on the following day Alexander ordered the fires to be put out and, when a few days later the body of Darius was discovered where he had been left to die by traitors, ordered that the Persian leader be buried with due honours.

The flames of a single night did not destroy the whole of royal Persepolis. Only the superstructures of the buildings, mostly made of cedarwood, perished immediately. What fire began, however,

time and neglect concluded. The walls of Persepolis, like those of Mesopotamian cities, were of mud brick, and the centuries eventually got the better of them. Persepolis (meaning the "city in ruin" in Greek) sank into oblivion. Its destiny had been both short-lived and improbable.

A MONUMENTAL BLEND

Darius I, the city's founder, was probably not of royal blood. His seizure of the throne marked a break in the dynasty and was fraught with dangers for his future reign. In order to highlight the refoundation of the empire he ordered two new capitals to be built, one at Susa, the other at Parsâ, the site of an important temple in the heart of Persis, 80 kilometres from present-day Shiraz (Iran).

At Parsa, against the side of Kuh-i Rahmat, the Mount of Mercy, Darius laid the foundations of a vast terrace 18 metres high, 530 metres long and 330 metres wide, and then began to build on it. First he built a monumental double stairway leading up to it, and then, on another terrace, a grand audience hall whose cedarwood ceiling was supported by 36 columns almost 20 metres high. This state chamber, which could hold thousands of people, was known as the Apadana. It opened out onto three porticoes, one of which looked out over the plain below. Behind the Apadana Darius built a smaller palace, the Tachara, which was used for state banquets. His successors, especially his son Xerxes (486-465 B.C.) and his grandson Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.) continued the construction work. Persepolis never entirely ceased to be a building site. The terrace was gradually covered by buildings: porticoes, a council hall, and a throne room, a harem and a treasury. The Achaemenid kings intended Persepolis to be an architectural expression of their greatness.

They brought in workmen and foremen from all the provinces of their empire: Achaemenid royal art borrowed styles from the different peoples under Persian domination. These influences, which are clearly visible, produce an overall effect that is undeniably original. A striking example of this blending is to be found in the columns which, with the plant motifs at their base, their tall shafts and their zoomorphic capitals, simultaneously recall Egypt, Ionian Greece and Assyria, while remaining typically Persian.

The Apadana, the royal audience chamber, was flanked by two monumental staircases. Above, part of the eastern staircase, adorned with magnificent low-relief sculptures. On the lower retaining wall a lion is shown fighting a bull in a setting of cypress-trees. Lines of guards adorn the upper wall.

Below, a stairway in the Tachara, or small palace, of Darius I. A combat between a lion and a bull is depicted on wall in foreground. The wall beyond is adorned with carvings of vassals bearing tribute.

The blend owes much, it is true, to the personality of the first master-builder. After Darius, Achaemenid art veered towards the colossal. At the head of the great staircase Xerxes built a massive portal defended by two huge human-headed bulls. In the recesses of his hall of a hundred columns, he had himself depicted as a giant killing equally gigantic monsters. Artaxerxes, on the other hand, did not follow his father's example and opted for greater refinement. This was the time when Phidias was supervising the construction of the Parthenon in Athens, and the flowering of Greek art probably had an influence in the Great King's court. The successors of Artaxerxes, with the exception of Artaxerxes III, who added a building to the terrace, simply

embellished buildings, that existed already.

What did Persepolis stand for in the Persian empire? It was neither a political capital nor a centre of economic activity. Nor did it have any great strategic importance. The king spent only a small part of the year there. In autumn and winter he was usually in residence at Susa; when the warm weather returned, he and his retinue went up to Ecbatana. These were the two cities from which the Achaemenid sovereigns promulgated their decrees, dispensed justice and conducted diplomacy. Persepolis became a kind of spiritual capital of Persia.

A SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

Each spring, at the vernal equinox, the King presided over a great celebration to mark the New Year, the Noruz. No foreign envoys were ever invited, which probably explains why neither the festival nor the city where it was held are ever mentioned in western sources. The perpetuation of an ancient Persian feast, Noruz was a religious celebration held under the auspices of Ahura Mazda, the supreme god of the empire, whose winged symbol was everywhere to be seen, but it was also a great political communion to which the King of Kings invited his subjects. Everything in Persepolis seems to have been designed to celebrate Noruz, and the ruling dynasty visited the city each year to re-establish its power symbolically by receiving tribute from the Persian and Mede nobility and submission from the empire's twenty-three nations. The ceremony ended with a magnificent banquet at which guests were offered all kinds of meat, from camel to ostrich, before leaving with the silver dishes from which they had eaten.

Today, twenty-five centuries later, only the barest of bones remain of Persepolis. A strange army of ruins, of empty door frames and the bases of stone columns, seems to gaze out over the immense plain, eternally expectant. These vestiges provoke speculation, as they have done for centuries. Since the 1930s, excavations at Persepolis have yielded a mass of precious data about the civilization of ancient Persia. But the city's mystery remains. It is not hard to imagine Darius emerging from his tomb in Naqsh-e Rustam a few kilometres away to review the Immortal Ten Thousand of his praetorian guard. ■

CHARLES-EMMANUEL DOXUAN
is a French dramatist and screenwriter with a special interest in ancient history.

Above, a detail of the eastern staircase of the Apadana showing two groups of tribute-bearers bringing their countries' finest products to the Persian king. Above, the Babylonians. Below, the Lydians.

TRIBUTE FIT FOR A KING

On the monumental staircases of the Apadana, the royal audience chamber, splendid bas-reliefs depict a procession of astonishing diversity.

Delegations of the tributary nations of the vast Persian empire come forward laden with gifts. The Babylonians are about to offer the King a zebu, fine woollen scarves and beautifully crafted vessels. The Scythians have brought a stallion, jewels and furs. Here are Cappadocians, and there Cilicians, leading two magnificent rams.

A royal audience is taking place. The Great King is on his throne with his golden sceptre in one hand and a lotus in the other. He is receiving tribute from a figure, apparently a Mede, who is bowing slightly and kissing his hand to the monarch. This is Oriental proskynesis, a form of homage that provoked great indignation among the Macedonians when Alexander demanded it from his own men. The crown prince and two dignitaries stand behind the throne.

It is late in the day. The tribute-bearers are probably in a hurry to join the king's guests who have already begun to gather in the gardens of the Tachara, the smaller palace. One group can be seen passing in front of a row of Susan guards. Persians wearing long pleated robes with broad sleeves, and Medes with their horsemen's cloaks thrown casually over their shoulders, are talking and laughing as they wait to be admitted. In the background a whole army of servants are at work. Their task is to bring hundreds of chickens, goats and sheep into the palace.

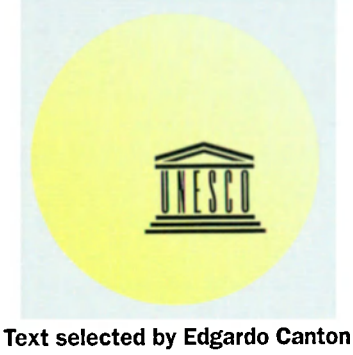
And here is the king coming out of his audience chamber. His diminutive parasol bearer and fly-catcher follow as close behind him as they can.

C-E.D.

Alfonso Reyes

The Latin American intellect

The Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes, a passionate humanist, historian, poet and critic, was one of the leading Latin American thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century. He was among the first intellectuals of Latin America to take an active interest in the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation. The text published below consists of extracts from Reyes' opening address at a meeting entitled "Europe-Latin America" that was organized by the Institute and held in Buenos Aires from 11 to 16 September 1936. In it he brilliantly defines the distinctive nature of Latin American culture and its place in the world.



Text selected by Edgardo Canton

This is not the place to talk about Latin American civilization: that would lead us off into the field of archaeology, which is outside our subject. To speak of Latin American culture would be somewhat ambiguous: it would make us think only of one of the branches of the European tree, transplanted into the soil of the Americas. We may, however, speak of a Latin American intellect, its outlook on life and its impact on life. This will enable us to define, albeit tentatively, the subtle gradation that is specifically Latin American.

A DIFFERENT TEMPO

Our drama has a stage, a chorus and a protagonist.

By stage I mean not a space but rather *a time*, in the almost musical sense of tempo or rhythm. A latecomer at the banquet of European civilization, Latin America made up for lost time by cutting corners, quickening the pace, hurrying from one form to another without giving the previous form time enough to mature. The leap is sometimes a bold one, and the new form comes out, as it were, half-baked. Tradition weighed less heavily, which explains the boldness. But the question needs to be asked as to whether the European rhythm, which we try to follow by making great strides—being incapable of the measured steps with which one should properly keep up with it—is the only historical "tempo" possible, and there is nothing to show that it is unnatural to speed up the process somewhat. Therein lies the secret of our history, of our politics and of our life, one of the watchwords of which is improvisation.

As to the chorus, the Latin American population is drawn mainly from the old indigenous elements, the massive influx of Spanish conquistadors, missionaries and settlers, and the subsequent immigrations from Europe as a whole. Clashes between the different bloodlines, problems of interbreeding and attempts at adaptation and absorption have all ensued. Depending on the region, it is sometimes the Indian and sometimes the Iberian element that predominates; the intermediate colour of the mestizo, the white of the European immigrants and the vast patches of African colour introduced into our land by the former colonial administrations in centuries gone by—every shade is included. Gradually, and not without effort, this heterogeneous substance has been absorbed and mixed in the bowels of Latin America, and now there already exists a Latin American humanity characteristic of this Latin American spirit.

This is where our actor, our protagonist comes in: the intellect.

AMERICANISTS VERSUS HISPANISTS

The Latin American intellect operates on a series of alternatives. Fifty years after the Spanish conquest, in other words as early as the second generation, a Latin American identity was to be found in Mexico: under the combined influences of the new environment, the different economic system, the contact with the Indian sensibility, and the proprietorial instinct originating from the previous occupation period, the Mexican Spaniards developed a colonial-aristocratic attitude that was at odds with the *arriviste* inclinations of the Spaniards coming straight off the boats. Literary criticism has picked out as central to this phenomenon, like a light source, the person of the Mexican dramatist Juan Ruiz de Alarcón who, via Corneille, influenced Molière and the French theatre of manners. The same could, however, apply in varying degrees to any of the countries of our part of the Americas. Within this as yet inchoate unease, the age-long desire of the Americas for independence was already throbbing.

This brings us to the second alternative: no sooner had independence been achieved than the inevitable conflict arose between the Americanists, who accentuated the new reality, and the Hispanists, who accentuated the old tradition.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48 ▶

GREENWATCH

MINING: A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH?

by France Bequette

Right, gold prospectors in a village on the island of Mindanao (Philippines).

Our needs for the earth's mineral resources are constantly increasing, but it is no secret that mineral extraction can cause damage to the environment. How high are these environmental costs? "The industrial sector," writes Mostafa K. Tolba, former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, in *Saving Our Planet* (1992), "is an important user of natural resources and is the major contributor to the world's pollution loads. The use of metals has increased over the past two decades, although regional consumption patterns vary. The developing countries have most of the world's proven reserves of important minerals such as bauxite, copper, tin, cobalt and phosphates, but they consume only about 12 per cent, exporting most of their production to developed countries."

In a study written in 1994 for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Alyson Warhurst confirms this analysis. "Many developing countries depend on the production of minerals to finance their development efforts," she writes. "In cases such as Zambia, Zaire, Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Papua New Guinea, more than 40 per cent of their foreign exchange earnings have come from mineral exports in recent years. In other countries including Zimbabwe, Botswana, Colombia, Venezuela and to a lesser extent Brazil, mineral production accounts for important portions of GNP." Many industrialized nations are not far behind. Canada, for example, is one of the world's major mineral exporters.

In both the developing and the industrial countries, the extraction of this wealth takes a toll. Every stage of mining and mineral processing—prospecting, building access roads to the site, ore extraction, smelting and refining—can have harmful effects on nature. All rock is composed of minerals, but they are only described as ores when their concentration is high enough to make exploitation commercially worthwhile. Most ores consist of several different minerals or metals, and in order to obtain them in pure form they have to be separated via a series of physical and chemical processes that are potentially polluting.

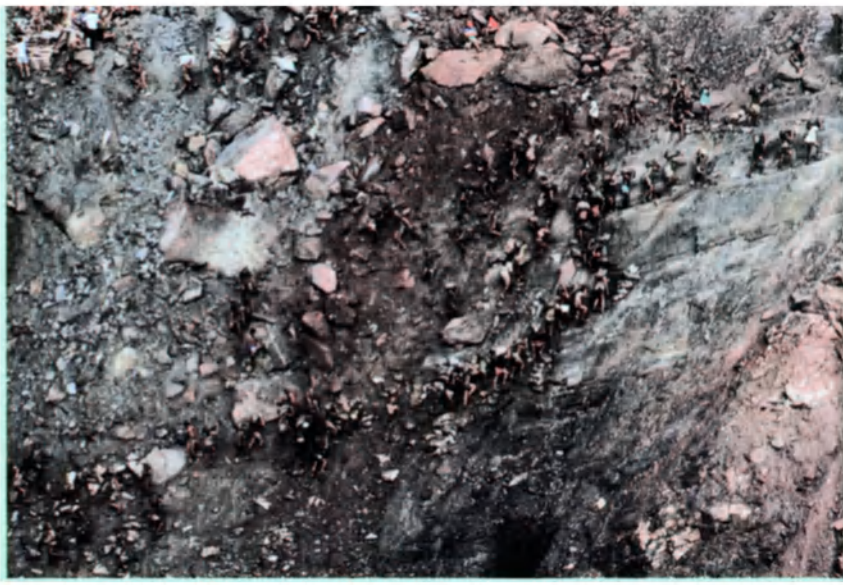
GOLD, MERCURY AND CYANIDE

Even at the exploration stage, drilling and earth-moving can damage the environment, but these operations are usually limited in scope. Environmental degradation really begins when a mine starts to be exploited. Six to eight years usually elapse between the discovery of a lode and its commercial exploitation. In the meantime roads and buildings have to be constructed, wells must be dug and the topsoil has to be removed. Large-scale excavation is required. Open-cast mines cause the greatest damage, producing about eight times more waste per ton of ore than underground mines. Although such waste material may remain chemically inert, it can block watercourses, cause clouds of dust and even, if it contains sulphur, dangerously pollute runoff water. Animal and plant life, forests, agriculture and recreation areas may also be damaged.

The State of Canada's Environment (1991) describes how enormous amounts of rock must be excavated to obtain a relatively small amount of minerals or metals: ore with 2 per cent copper content yields 20 kg of metal per ton of processed rock. According to another example cited in the OECD report, in the United States, in the case of a lower copper content, about 0.9 per cent, an estimated 990 million tons of ore must be mined to obtain 9 million

tons of copper. The figures are even more dramatic for gold mining. A company in the United States, Goldstrike, had to excavate 325,000 tons of ore and waste to produce 50 kg of gold metal. This gives some idea of the environmental degradation caused by this kind of activity.

Because of the volumes involved and the reagents required to obtain pure ore, there is good reason to feel anxious about water quality in mining regions. Mercury and sodium cyanide are commonly used in gold mining, for example. The gold amalgamates with mercury and is then heated to 300-400°C when the mercury vaporizes, leaving the gold. The mercury can be recondensed for future use, but it can also escape from jerry-built mining installations belonging to small-scale prospectors and turn up in the river mud. Gold miners frequently move from place to place and pay little attention to the environmental impact of what they do. Mercury not only poses a direct threat to their health, it also works its way into the food chain so that fish from the river are dangerous to eat. "With an estimated usage rate of 4 kg of mercury per kg of gold produced," the OECD report continues, "the total environmental loading of mercury from such sources is roughly 400-500 tons per year." Two recent case-studies on a river in Mindanao (Philippines) and the Madeira River in the Amazon region of Brazil have shown that mercury toxicity in alluvial mud and fish was six times higher than the rates accepted by the World Health Organization. Several cases of acute mercury poisoning and related deaths have been reported from both the Philippines and Brazil.



An opencast gold mine in Serra Pelada (Brazil).

IT COSTS MORE TO POLLUTE THAN PROTECT

A humorist once wrote that cities ought to be built in the countryside. In much the same vein an economist reeently suggested that the low-income countries were ready to accept environmental degradation in return for industrial expansion. And surely nobody lives in deserts and jungles, anyway. It is hard to share this viewpoint, for the fact is that jungles and deserts are rarely uninhabited. As Alyson Warhurst points out, ". . . mineral projects . . . due to their remoteness, often require agricultural and fishery projects to be established nearby. Precisely by being so remote, communities that do suffer environmental degradation of their resources are less likely to have it recorded and less able to respond." And in any case who would be ready to listen to their claims? Warhurst cites "the enforced removal of two aboriginal communities from their land during the construction of the North Queensland (Australia) bauxite strip-mine at Weipa in the early 1960s," and notes that the Bougainville copper mine in Papua New Guinea has ravaged vast areas of Nasiosi and Rorovana farmland and forest.

Contrary to what one might expect, it costs mining companies more to pollute than to respect the environment. First of all because they can be held responsible for the harmful effects of their activities on people. The OECD study cites as a recent example that of "Colquiri where the Bolivian State Mining Company, COMIBOL, was responsible for both the mine and the welfare of the mining community. Through mismanagement it allowed chemical effluent from the concentration plant to flow directly into the natural drainage supplying water to the community, resulting in high mortality and illness, par-

Prospecting for gold in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

ticularly amongst infants, the economic burden of which fell on the company." Moreover, while the dust and vapour that escape from smelters are highly toxic and can contribute to acid rain (an estimated 6 million tons of sulphur dioxide are released into the atmosphere each year by the smelting of copper and other non-ferrous metals), they also contain valuable metals such as gold, or expensive reagents such as mercury and cyanide. Producing cleanly, i.e. reducing emissions and recovering metal losses, is not only environmentally indispensable but also makes economic good sense.

For many years mines were opened, worked, then closed and abandoned as landfill sites. Mostafa Tolba notes that "Thousands of landfill sites and surface impoundments used for dumping hazardous wastes have been found to be unsatisfactory. Corrosive acids, persistent organic compounds and toxic metals have accumulated in these sites for decades. In the Clark Fork Mining Complex in western Montana—the largest site identified in the United States, and considered the largest hazardous waste dump in the world—ponds of wastes from copper and silver mining and smelting activities have been accumulating for 125 years." Cleaning up abandoned sites is expensive. The United States legislation known as the "Superfund" is based on the principle that "the polluter pays" and obliges mining companies to spend millions of dollars on site rehabilitation.

The most responsible and dynamic mining companies in the North may well be heeding the new "ecological imperative", but it will be less easy to apply in the South. What the South needs, far more than repressive and virtually unenforceable laws, is technology transfers, training programmes and the enhancement of its engineering and managerial skills. But perhaps the first step of all should be for the North to respect the South, especially in this field. ■

FURTHER READING

Environmental Degradation from Mining and Mineral Processing in Developing Countries: Corporate Responses and National Policies,
Alyson Warhurst, OECD, 1994
(in English and French).

Saving our Planet, Challenges and Hopes,
Mostafa K. Tolba,UNEP-Chapman & Hall, London, 1992
(in English, French and Spanish)

The State of Canada's Environment,
the Government of Canada, Ottawa, 1991
(in English and French)

FRANCE BEQUETTE is a Franco-American journalist specializing in environmental questions.

Large diamond deposits lie beneath the Namib Desert in the coastal region of Namibia.

WORLD

PRETTY BUT DEADLY

Thousands of clumps of densely packed leaves sporting purple flowers—otherwise known as water hyacinth—float on the surface of Lake Victoria, the world's second largest freshwater lake, which lies between Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Kenya. Water hyacinth may look beautiful but its effects are disastrous. It propagates at an alarming rate, and is carpeting the lake with thick green leaves that prevent boats from plying through the water or tying up at docks, threatening the fishing industry and blocking the pipes of water treatment plants. Spraying herbicides on the lake is out of the question, but Beninese entomologists have discovered a species of hyacinth-munching beetle, 1,000 of which have been released experimentally in hyacinth-infested Lake Kyoga in central Uganda. Results of the trial will not be known for several months. Kenya and Tanzania are worried that the beetles may attack crops. Meanwhile, the half million Ugandans who depend on fishing for a livelihood are extremely concerned, as well as those for whom fish from Lake Victoria provide their only protein source. ■

SUNDAY, CHILLY SUNDAY

The scientific journal *Nature* has recently confirmed what many people knew all along, i.e. that it is colder on Saturdays and Sundays than on the other days of the week, in the northern hemisphere at any rate. Adrian Gordon, a specialist at the Flinders Institute for Atmospheric and Marine Sciences in Adelaide (Australia), examined data obtained by satellite on global temperatures from 1979 to 1992 and found an average spread of four hundredths of a degree Fahrenheit between Wednesday, the warmest day of the week, and Sunday, the coldest. The discrepancy may exist because at weekends there are fewer cars on the road and most factories close down. ■

MAB GOES MUSHROOMING

As a result of growing competition for mushrooms in the forests of the Pacific northwest of the United States by both commercial and recreational mushroomers, a study on mushrooming funded by UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere project (MAB) began in the summer of 1994 on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State, where chanterelle mushrooms are particularly abundant. Volunteers from local mushroom societies, supervised by specialists from the Forest Sciences Laboratory in Corvallis (Oregon), are monitoring mushrooms' fruiting times, abundance, grade, weights and location. They are also noting relationships between different fungi, the effects of mushroom picking on nearby vegetation and the impact of human activity on the ecosystem. The MAB study hopes to develop some management guidelines for preserving and enhancing a resource that depends upon a variety of environmental factors. ■

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 44

Sarmiento[1] was primarily an Americanist, Bello[2] a Hispanist. This clash has expressed itself many times in history as a duel between liberals and conservatives. Emancipation was so recent that neither fathers nor sons could easily come to terms with it. In the fullness of time, all the different metals melted, as in the great fire of Corinth, into one flowing stream of metal.

Shod with our seven-league boots, we now come to the third alternative: one of our poles is in Europe, the other in the United States. Both influence us and we draw inspiration from both; but it seems that our Latin American intellect encounters in Europe a view of the human condition that is more universal, more essential, and more in conformity with its own sensitivity (which is not to deny our affinities with the elite of the other America, and disregarding certain historical misunderstandings, for which there is now, happily, less and less justification and which are irrelevant here). We dislike the tendency towards separation of the races. We do not like to consider a given human type as a mere curiosity or an exotic, amusing case, for such a view is not a basis for genuine spiritual fellow feeling. The conquistador Cortés himself pierced the secret of his conquest while pillowed on the breast of Doña Marina[3]: it was maybe there that he learned to love his prey, where other, colder-hearted commanders, like Caesar in Gaul, were never able to do so, and began to nurture in his bosom certain ambitions towards autonomy that, in the privacy of the family, he was to pass on to his sons, later to be tortured for plotting against the Spanish motherland.

SYNTHESIS AND ACTION

Such is the stage, such are the chorus and the protagonist. I have outlined the main choices open to the latter. I must now explain what I meant by the watchword of improvisation.

The Latin American intellect is of necessity less specialized than the European. Our social structure makes it so. The writer has more ties, he usually holds several posts and seldom manages to be only a writer. He is nearly always a writer plus something, or some things, else. There are not, there could not be, any ivory towers in our part of the world. This further antithesis of advantages and disadvantages finds its synthesis, its balance, in a particular way of understanding intellectual work as a public service and a civilizing duty. This conception fortunately does not rule out the possibility of interludes, pure literary self-indulgence, fountains to which one must frequently return to bathe in the health-giving waters. In Europe, such interludes may be the writer's normal state. It is as if the European writer was born on the top platform of the Eiffel Tower: just a few metres' effort and there he is, lording it on the spiritual summits.

The Latin American writer, on the other hand, starts life in the fiery central regions. By dint of colossal effort, exhibiting a vitality carried to so high a pitch as to resemble genius, he barely manages to raise himself a little above the earth's crust. I do not believe that this subtly characteristic feature of Latin American culture is fraught with any danger of detachment, quite the contrary. I have a presentiment that the Latin American intellect is destined for the noblest complementary function, that of establishing syntheses, tentative though they may be and hasty though they may prove; of putting the outcome of thought rapidly into practice, testing the value of theory on the living flesh of action.

SOULS WITHOUT PASSPORTS

The Latin American spirit yields with singular pliancy to the purpose of achieving that magnificent harmony to which I look forward. The fact is that our spirit, however deeply rooted it may be in our soil, is internationalist. This is not only because our part of the Americas fulfils all the requirements to be a melting pot for the future "cosmic race" dreamed of by Vasconcelos,[4] but also because we have had to fetch our cultural instruments from the great European centres. We have grown accustomed to treating others' concepts as our own business. This internationalism, inseparable from our nature and strengthened by the historical ties of brotherhood that bind us to so many republics, is the cause of an undeniable pacifist tendency within the Latin American intellect.

The generation immediately preceding ours still felt that it had been born in the prison cell of several concentric circles of fatality, experienced by the most pessimistic members of that generation in the following order.

The first great fatality was of course that of being human, in accordance with old Sileno's maxim as recorded by Calderón: "For the greatest crime/ Of man is to be born." Inside that first circle was the second, that of coming too late into a world too old. The echoes of romanticism could still be heard, distilled by the Cuban poet Juan Clemente Zenea into two lines: "My time is that of ancient Rome/And my brothers died with Greece." In our literary world this sense of being born at the wrong time dominated the average mentality.

There was a third circle: in addition to the misfortune of being human and living in the modern age, there was the specific misfortune of being Latin American, being born on and rooted into a soil that was not the present seat of civilization but a branch office of the world. To quote Victoria Ocampo,[5] our grandparents felt they were in possession of souls without passports.

Of all these ghosts that are gone with the wind, that the dawning light of day has illuminated with a new meaning to the point of making them at least acceptable realities, something yet remains in the nooks and crannies of Latin America, something that has to be driven out by flinging wide the windows and by calling superstition by its name, which is the best way of exorcising it. In the main, however, all that has already been put right.

Having laid down these premises and having examined the case, I shall make bold to employ the style of a speech for the defence. Between Spain and ourselves there has long existed a feeling of levelling out and of equality. Now, addressing the court of thinkers of all nations, I say, acknowledge the rights we have won, as citizens of the universal homeland. We have come of age. You can no longer delay taking account of us. ■

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1 Domino Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), Argentinian statesman and writer. His works include *Facundo* (1845), in which his liking and regard for the gauchos are evident. *Editor*

2 Andrés Bello (1781-1865), Chilean writer and politician of Venezuelan origin. Poet, philologist, grammarian and critic, he had a considerable influence throughout Latin America, where he is regarded as one of the makers of the region's cultural consciousness. *Editor*

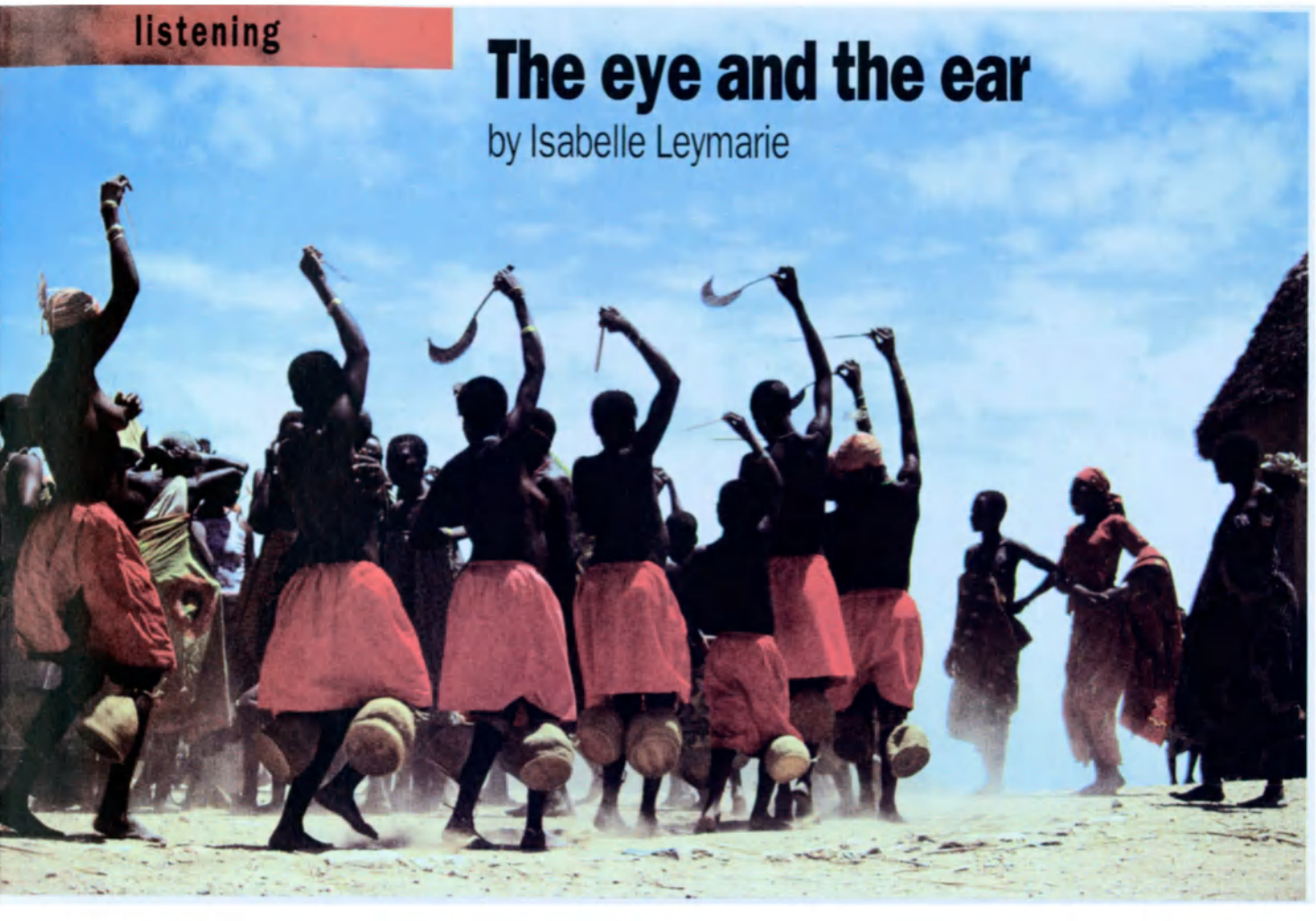
3 Marina, also known as Malinalli or Malinche, an Indian noble of Nahuatl origin who was Hernán Cortés' consort, counsellor and interpreter. *Editor*

4 José Vasconcelos (1822-1959), Mexican politician, writer and philosopher whose works include *La Raza Cósmica* (1925). *Editor*

5 Victoria Ocampo (1882-1970), Argentinian woman of letters, founded and directed the review *Sur* (1931-1970), contributing to the dissemination of world literature in her country. *Editor.*

The eye and the ear

by Isabelle Leymarie



A traditional dance during a festival in Cameroon.

Should music be seen and not heard?

Music exists in every society, but the different worlds of music seem divided from one another by aesthetic standards, by behaviour and by rules that are sometimes antagonistic if not irreconcilable. Because of these differences people sometimes tend to make value judgements that are invalid because they are based on a mistaken understanding of what music is. The gap between western classical music and black music is particularly wide, and in these two cases perception, execution and appreciation seem governed by different criteria.

All human beings—and every civilization—give precedence to one sense or combination of senses in their perception of the world. Whereas people in the West tend to attach most importance to the eye, black societies tend to give priority to the ear, leading to emphasis on the physical and instinctive. Nicole Ricaille, a French specialist in ear research, notes that doctors can save some patients from deep depression by treating the ear, which is linked to the parasympathetic nervous system. At night, while we sleep, the ear recharges the body like a battery, and disorders of the ear can lead to loss of energy. Auditory curves based on tests and indicating the frequencies we hear and the balance between our left and right ears can reveal details about our psychological profile, certain physiological malfunctions, and even, in some cases, about our family background. During childhood we may refuse to hear a scolding parent or an unpleasant teacher by involuntarily "switching off" the frequencies that correspond to these disagreeable voices. These missing frequencies, which played a protective role in childhood, may lead in adult life to various kinds of disorders, even depression and suicidal tendencies. Nicole Ricaille suggests that in general low frequencies may correspond to earthiness and high frequencies to spirituality.

A cerebral approach

The West, which has a high regard for the plastic arts and the written word (both of which are eye-oriented), tends to approach music cerebrally, through the written score and by assessing the performance, interpretation or "reading" of a work in accordance with relatively strict, non-physical conventions. It also promotes the development of discursive disciplines such as musicology and the sociology and philosophy of music. With their abundance of graphic symbols, some contemporary musical scores increasingly resemble works of visual art, and for some modern composers the conceptualization of a piece of music takes precedence over its musical content and even over its emotional charge. The West also makes a very strong distinction between classical music (including religious music), which is considered "serious", and pop and folk music, which are not.

It also cuts off music from dance and the spoken word. These are intermingled in black societies, which are particularly partial to sung stories (especially the Cameroonian *mvet*), stories told by dance (the *kont* of Saint Lucia and

A scene from a Salzburg production of Rossini's comic opera *La scala di seta* (*The Silken Ladder*, 1812).

Suriname), danced and sung sketches (the mumming of biblical or Shakespearean stories to an instrumental, danced or sung accompaniment that is found all over the English-speaking West Indies) and transitions between spoken language and song (soul music and gospel).

The polyrhythmic body

While the West insists on fidelity to a fixed pattern, Africa and black America highlight the imagination and the unexpected in oratory, music and dance. A West Indian choreographer told me recently that some classical European dancers with whom he had worked knew their steps by heart and had impeccable technique but did not dance *with* the music. It was, he explained, as if dance and music were two separate areas and that the dancers had to superimpose them, to make one fit with the other.

Dancers to black music do not blindly follow the beat. By dissociating different parts of their bodies, they create their own polyrhythms, rather like a musical instrument (tap dancing is a famous example of the dancer's rhythmic creativity). Sometimes, as with the Cuban *rumba brava* or the Puerto Rican *bomba*, they impose their own rhythms on the drummers, who tailor their playing to the dancers. Billy Bergman, a specialist in Caribbean music, writes as follows about the Haitian voodoo dance known as *yanvalu*: "The tempo, which overlays a slow beat, gives a false impression of speed. It dictates a fluid dance in which the feet move fast, the head slowly and the torso even more slowly. This polyrhythmic dancing is a key to all Latin-Caribbean dancing. The dancers in these regions never try to copy exactly the intricacies of the tempo. Their movements make their own counterpoint to the texture of the rhythms. People unaccustomed to African rhythms often move their feet wildly to the complex beat of a talking drum, as if they are in a western and an outlaw is shooting at their feet. The Haitians, on the other hand, know that fluid, contrasting movements are more appropriate."

The ritual surrounding the performance of western music—a raised stage separating the audience from the musicians, an imposing baton-wielding conductor "interpreting" the work, ceremonial clothing (tail coat, evening gowns), the audience's reverent silence and immobility during the concert, the salvos of applause which end it—highlights its separation from the listeners, who take no physical part in the music and are not allowed to dance to it or even externalize their feelings too visibly. This alienation is accentuated by the glorification of soloists and the adulation showered on opera singers, show-biz personalities and classical dancers, who live in a world beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, a phenomenon that parallels the cult of the ego in the West.

■ (To be continued)

ISABELLE LEYMARIE
is a Franco-American musicologist.

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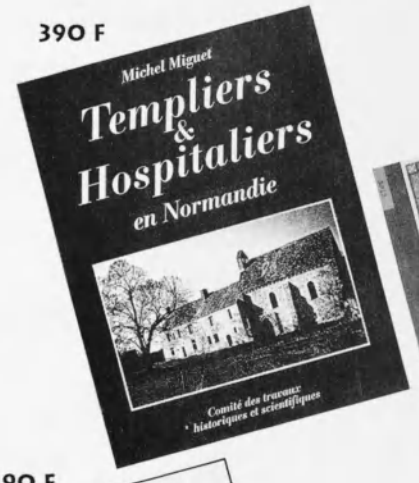

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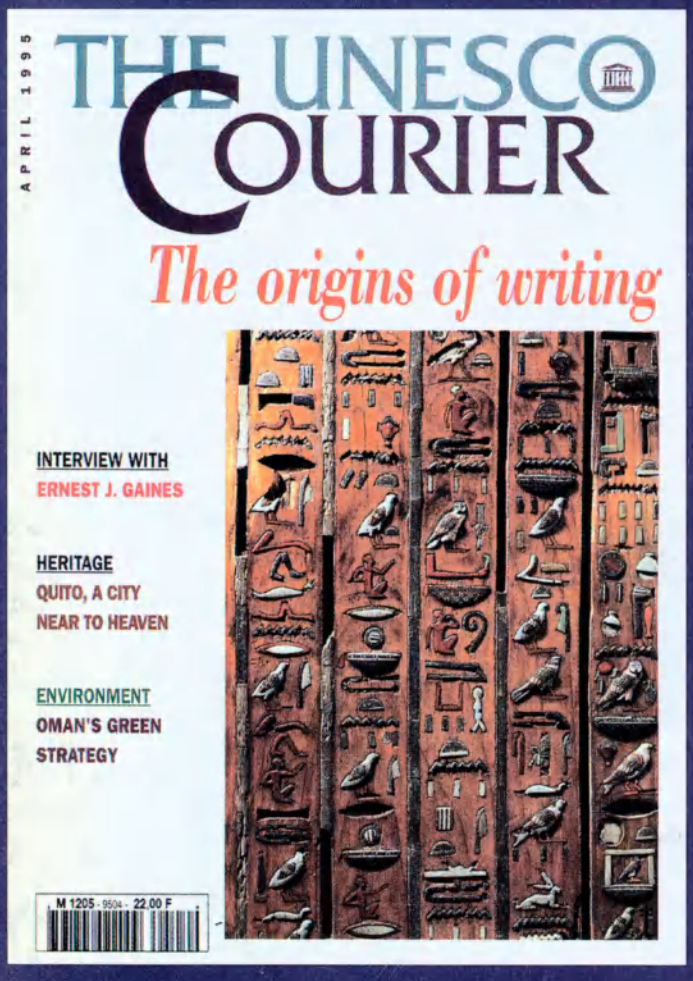

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